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THE CATECHISM IN EXAMPLES

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THE CATECHISM IN EXAMPLES

By the REV. D. CHISHOLM
Priest of the Diocese of Aberdeen

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GRACE: THE SACRAMENTS

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XXXVII

GRACE

GRACE is a supernatural gift of God, freely bestowed on us for our sanctification and salvation.

There are two kinds of grace : the one is called sanctifying grace, and the other actual grace.

I. On Sanctifying Grace.

Sanctifying grace is that grace bestowed on us by God on the day of our Baptism, which remains in the soul ever afterwards, unless destroyed by mortal sin. A soul which is in sanctifying grace is said to be " in the state of grace."

When you are in the state of grace, my child, your soul is very beautiful. It is so beautiful that nothing in this world can be compared to it.

VISION OF A SOUL IN GOD'S GRACE.

St. Catharine of Siena was often favoured by God with holy visions. One day He showed her the beauty of a soul in the state of grace. It was so beautiful that she could not look on it ; the brightness of that soul dazzled her.

" O my God !" she cried out, " if I did not know that there is only one God, I should think that this was one !"

The blessed Raymond, her confessor, asked her to describe to him, as far as she was able, the beauty of the soul she had seen.

St. Catharine thought of the sweet light of the morning, and of the beautiful colours of the rainbow, but that soul was far more beautiful. She remembered the dazzling beams of the noonday sun, but the light which beamed from that soul was far brighter. She thought of the pure whiteness of the lily and of the fresh snow, but that is only an earthly whiteness. The soul which she had seen was bright with the whiteness of Heaven, such as there is not to be found on earth.

" My father," she answered, " I cannot find anything in this world that can give you the smallest idea of what I have seen. Oh ! if you could but see the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, you would sacrifice your life a hundred times for its salvation ! No, nothing in this world can bear any resemblance to it. I asked the angel who was with me," she continued, " what had made that soul so beautiful, and he answered me : ' It is the image and likeness of God in that soul, and the Divine Grace which made it so beautiful.' "

From her Life.

THE LITTLE INDIAN CHILD.

St. Francis Xavier was one day sent for by a poor Indian to baptize his child, who was dying. The Saint went immediately, and baptized the child. It died soon afterwards.

When he saw that the child was dead, he raised his eyes to Heaven, and broke forth into a hymn of joy.

The people wondered when they saw this, and asked him why he wept with joy, when those around him wept with sorrow.

"You know," he said, "how many and how painful have been the journeys I have undertaken since I came to India. This day I am sufficiently rewarded for them all, because I have been able to clothe this soul with grace, and to send one child more into Heaven to glorify God." LOHNER.

Great, indeed, my child, is the beauty of your soul when it is in the state of grace. Oh, keep away from mortal sin, that its beauty may never be destroyed

II. MORTAL SIN DESTROYS SANCTIFYING GRACE.

O my child, ever keep in mind that even one mortal sin, wilfully committed, separates the soul from God. The soul in which mortal sin dwells may appear in the eyes of others to be alive as before, but in the eyes of God it is dead, because, by the loss of sanctifying grace, it is separated from Him Who is its life. O my child, may God preserve you from so terrible a calamity!

THE CHRISTMAS-TREE.

There grew in the forest a beautiful young fir-tree. The ground in which it was planted was covered with snow, for it was Christmastide, but

the pure white snow only served to make the green foliage of the fir-tree look still more beautiful.

The villagers, who were looking forward to a season of festivity, as the great festival of Christ's Nativity drew near, sent the forester into the wood to bring them a Christmas-tree to adorn the place where they were to assemble.

As he was looking around for a suitable one, his eyes fell on the fir-tree of which we have spoken.

" This is the most beautiful of all the trees I can see. I will cut it down and carry it to the village."

So he took up his axe, and with it struck the trunk of the beautiful tree, and the root and the stem were very soon separated. He then carried it to the village, and the people were all in rapture when they saw it.

In the midst of his little children, who, like those around them, were full of joy and gladness as they stood gazing on the beautiful tree, stood a man, the father of a family, silent and thoughtful. He did not join with the others in their boisterous mirth, and a tear even seemed to fall from his eye as he looked down affectionately on his little ones playing merrily at his side.

" O father," they rapturously exclaimed, " what a beautiful tree ! The branches are so green, and the stem so noble ! But why do you not rejoice with us, papa, and why are you looking so sad ?"

" My dear children," he answered, " this tree, so beautiful and so noble, puts me in mind of the beauty of your souls at this moment, and brings before me the thought of what may one day happen to each of you. While this tree was standing in the forest,

it was fixed to the ground by its roots, and it drew up from the earth the sap which alone could make it the beautiful tree that you admire so much. If the forester had only left it alone, it would have grown up every day higher and still more noble, until it had reached its full growth and attained perfection.

" But, alas ! even in its early years it has been ruthlessly separated from its parent stem by his axe, and its beauty must in a short time decay, and these branches, which at this moment fill the children and the people with joy, will in a few days be fit only for the fire.

" Your souls at this moment, my children, are fresh and beautiful, because they are united to God by grace ; and if you continue to live in the grace of God, you will become daily more and more beautiful, until you attain that perfection for which God created you—union with Himself in Heaven. But if by a mortal sin you separate yourselves from God, your souls become dead ; and so long as you remain in that state, you are fit only to be cut down and to be cast into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the Devil and his angels. You may, indeed, it is true, for a little time appear outwardly to be beautiful as before, but in the eyes of God you are already dead, because you are separated from Him Who is the very life of your souls."

The children attentively listened to their father's words, and never forgot the beautiful comparison he had placed before them. Would to God that every Christian child would also always bear this example in their minds '

III. Actual Grace: its Necessity.

Actual grace is the grace God gives to us to enable us to avoid evil, and to do good.

You cannot do any good for Heaven without the grace of God. You are like a little child that cannot walk. If his mother does not keep him up, he cannot take one step, but will stagger and fall; so, unless you are strengthened by the actual grace of God, you cannot persevere in the state of grace.

ERON, THE SOLITARY.

In the day of St. Palladius the anchorite, there was a monk called Eron, who dwelt in a cell not far from the place where that great Saint lived.

He was born of a noble family, and was also blessed with great natural talents. But God inspired him even from his youth with the desire of leading a more perfect life. Eron at once obeyed the call of God, and left all things to follow Him.

There were at that time in the desert many holy men, who had gone there to serve God in silence and prayer, but there was not one of them so fervent as Eron.

He spent the day in continual prayer and in works of penance, and the only food he ate consisted of wild herbs. The brethren spoke of him as of one who was already a Saint, and strove to imitate the example he gave them.

But as time went on he allowed vain thoughts to enter his mind. He had, indeed, done much for God, but he now seemed to forget that it was by God's grace he had been able to do it. He was

pleased when he heard others speak of his mortified life, and thought that he already deserved to be called a Saint because he had been so holy.

From one fault he fell into another, till in the end he left the desert altogether, and went back to the world, which he had long ago forsaken at the call of God. There he met with evil companions, and because he trusted to himself, and neglected to ask God for His help, he fell into great sins.

For a long time he lived in this wretched state, till at last God had compassion on him, and let him see how far he had fallen, because he had trusted so much to himself.

He was struck down by an illness which lasted for six months. He thought he was going to die, and his soul was filled with great fear when he remembered the bad life he had led, and the judgment he would soon have to undergo.

"O my God, make me better again!" he prayed. "I will return to the desert, and live as I did before, and do penance for my sins."

God heard his prayer, and Eron kept his promise. He returned to the desert, and humbly asked pardon for the scandal he had given. He did not live long after his return, but in a short time died a holy and a happy death, surrounded by his brethren. *Life of St. Macarius.*

From this example you can learn a great lesson. If Eron fell into sin because he trusted to himself, and not to God's grace, you have much more reason to be afraid, since you are so far from being as perfect as he was.

ST. CATHERINE OF GENOA BEWAILS HER FRAILTY.

St. Catherine, as well as all the other great Saints of God, saw clearly how weak and frail human nature is in itself, and that it cannot do any good without the help of God's grace.

"O my God," she was frequently heard to say, "how very weak I am! If left to myself, I cannot do any good in such a manner as to please Thee. Left to myself, I can only do what is wrong. Alas! what would become of me if Thou didst leave me without Thy grace?"

When she fell into any venial fault—for even the just man "falls seven times a day"—she would raise up her eyes to Heaven and exclaim, "This is another of the fruits that my garden produces," meaning that faults and sins are the natural productions of human nature if not supported by the grace of God.

THE VOICE OF GOD.

In the year 1650 a soldier, who was leading a careless life, was walking in the street at midday near the Church of St. Peter's Fort, in the Island of Martinique. Suddenly he heard a voice which called him twice distinctly by name. He instantly turned towards the place from which the sound seemed to proceed, but, to his surprise, saw no one. Thinking that he was mistaken, he resumed his walk.

He had not gone many steps when he heard the same voice calling him as before. This time it seemed to proceed from the interior of the church,

so he entered. But here again he saw no one, although he looked in every part of the church. So he turned to go out, wondering, at the same time, how he could hear his name uttered twice so distinctly without seeing the person who uttered it.

As he was on the threshold of the church, he heard again, still more distinctly, the same voice calling on him by name. This time he seemed to hear it not only with his ears, but even in his very soul. In his wonder and alarm at this mysterious voice he went to a priest whom he saw advancing towards the church, and asked him what it could mean.

The priest, when he had thought for a few moments on what the man had told him, answered : " Doubtless, my child, it is the voice of God Himself, who desires you to become a good Christian. Go at once to Confession, and begin to serve God from this time faithfully, that you may inherit the blessings He has prepared for you."

The soldier obeyed, and became a fervent Christian.

Jesus is calling on you even more distinctly than He did on that soldier. His priests, who speak to you in His Name, are every day asking you to avoid sin and to return to God. And have you not often heard the sweet voice of Jesus Himself within you telling you to be good and love Him ? Now at this moment He is calling on you in an especial manner to come and be His faithful child, and to love Him in this world as well as in eternity. Oh, then, like the soldier, obey his voice, and begin now to be His child in deed and in truth.

HENRY IV. OF FRANCE AND HIS TUTOR.

Henry IV. of France, in one of his conversations with his tutor, told him that his one great desire was, not only to equal, but even to surpass, the most celebrated men of whom he had read.

His tutor, a man of great piety and wisdom, said to him in reply : " What assurance can you give me that you will be able to fulfil this excellent resolution ?"

" What a strange question to ask me ! Do you think that I am not sincere in what I have said ?"

" I am fully persuaded that you have spoken from the depths of a most sincere and generous heart. But I feel that you have undertaken a project which will be most difficult to realize, and I desired to know on what grounds you built your hopes of success."

" My hope of succeeding," he replied, " is founded on the great desire I have to succeed. Do you not think that success must follow every noble exertion we make to possess that which is the object of our ambition, when undertaken with a firm resolution and determination ?"

" My dear child," said his preceptor, " your reasoning is that of a pagan, not of a Christian. You must know that, of himself, man is incapable of accomplishing any good action, or even of desiring to do so, unless God inspires him with that desire, and gives him the necessary help to fulfil it. It is without doubt that it was God who inspired you with this noble thought of imitating, and even of

excelling, the great men of all times, and it is He alone who can grant you the strength necessary to realize it." *Vie de Henri IV.*

ST. PHILIP NERI'S WORDS TO JESUS.

St. Philip Neri was not only a good Christian, but a great Saint. Every day of his life he tried to please God, and every day, too, by his good works, he was heaping up for himself great treasures for Heaven.

Yet there was one thought that was always uppermost in his mind day and night. He thought that he might still be lost, because he might not persevere to the end. Every morning he used to say to Jesus: "O my Jesus, take care of me this day, and do not leave me to myself; for if Thou dost not watch over me, I may, like another Judas, betray Thee by falling into sin."

Again, he would frequently say: "O my Jesus, the wound in Thy Sacred Side was indeed very large; yet, if Thou leavest me to myself, I may make it still larger. If Thou dost not hold me up by Thy grace, I shall most certainly fall into sin."

St. Philip persevered unto the end, because he was always watching and praying. So it is only by constant watching and prayer, my child, that you will overcome temptation and obtain perseverance.

IV. The Reward of Persevering in God's Grace.

My child, the path to Paradise is sometimes long and weary, but the reward that is to be given to those who persevere to the end is worth all the trouble

that we can take in this life to obtain it. Be faithful, therefore, to the end in the good resolutions you have taken; for God is always ready to assist by His grace those who earnestly desire to keep them.

ST. CAMILLUS'S CONVERSION.

The father of St. Camillus did not take care of him when he was young, hence he grew up without piety. He was even given to many sins in his youth, and was walking on the broad way which leads to Hell, when he was converted by a special grace of God.

One day he was so far reduced to poverty that, to obtain a livelihood, he hired himself to some masons who were building a house, to carry the stones and mortar for them.

While occupied at this work, he one day—it was the festival of Our Lady's Purification—heard in his heart the voice of God's grace.

At that moment God brought before his mind his whole past life, and showed him the terrible state of his soul.

He threw himself on his knees in the middle of the road on which he stood, and, yielding to the grace which God gave him, began to weep bitterly.

"Ah, how miserable I am!" he said. "Why have I not long ago begun to know and serve my Lord and my God? Why have I so long resisted His grace when He called me to change my life? Oh, what a life I have led! It would have been better that I had never been born! Pardon me, O Lord! pardon a most miserable sinner, and give me time to do true penance!"

Saying these words, he struck his breast, and made a solemn promise to live for God alone all the rest of his life ; which promise he kept most faithfully. He is now a Saint in Heaven.

V. With the Grace of God we can do all Things.

If it is true that you can do nothing for Heaven without grace, it is also true that with it you can do all things. Oh, how precious, then, is the grace of God !

BLESSED LANFRANC OF CANTERBURY.

Blessed Lanfranc was one of the most learned men of the eleventh century. His father was rich, and was thus able to give him an excellent education. But in his youth the world and human learning took up all his attention, and he grew up in an entire ignorance of his religious duties.

Having a great desire to make his name known over all Europe, he passed over into France. One day towards evening, as he was passing through a forest not far from the city of Rouen, he was met by a band of robbers, who took from him all he possessed, and, having tied his hands and his feet, and having covered his eyes with a handkerchief, left him by the wayside.

Night came on, but no one came to his assistance. He began, then, to think of God. He had often read of how God extends His protection to those who pray to Him. But as he had never been accustomed to pray, he did not know how to begin.

" O my God, I do not know how to pray to Thee," he said. " I have given so much time to human science that I have entirely neglected the care of my soul. But, O my God, take me out of this danger, and I promise for the time to come to live in a way that will please Thee."

Next morning some people who were passing heard his cries for help, and going to the place where he lay, released him.

" Can you tell me the way that leads to the poorest monastery in this part of the country ?" he said.

They answered : " There is none we know of so poor as the one which is being built at a little distance from this by a very holy man of God called Hellouin."

When they had pointed out the way to him, they departed, and Lanfranc immediately went to the place of which they had told him. As he drew near to it, he saw the saintly Abbot Hellouin with his own hands helping the masons in their work.

" I am come to stay with you," he said, " for I want to serve God and save my soul."

The Abbot asked him who he was, and what had been the cause of this heroic resolution ; and, having heard his history, he sent for one of the monks and told him to give the stranger the book containing the rules of their Order, that he might know what would be required of him if he took up his abode amongst them.

Lanfranc took the book, and when he had read it, he returned it to the Abbot, who said to him :

" You see the strict life we lead in this house, and you know the penances we perform, and our con-

tinual prayer, and the silence we impose upon ourselves. Do you think you can accomplish all these things ?"

Lanfranc answered : " Of myself I confess I cannot do so, but with God's help I hope to be able to observe everything laid down in the rule, no matter how difficult it may now appear to me."

The Abbot was pleased with this answer, and consented to receive him. He spent many years there, and during all that time he persevered as he began, and faithfully accomplished every point of the rule. Some parts of it were at first difficult to him who had been so long accustomed to all the pleasures of life ; but as he placed his entire confidence in God, he received from Him all the grace he stood in need of to perform them.

After some years God was pleased to exalt his humble servant and make him Archbishop of Canterbury. By his piety and learning he became one of the greatest lights that ever shone in the Church of our native country.

Grande Vie des Saints, Mai 28.

THE HEROIC CHILD OF JAPAN.

During one of the persecutions which the Emperors of Japan raised against the Christians, a husband and wife were sitting together in their humble home, speaking of the terrible death they would have to endure if they were found out to be Christians, and of the joys God would give them in Heaven as the reward.

" Ah," said the wife, " willingly would I lay down my life for the love of God, and ardently do I long

for the hour when I may enter into His presence in Heaven. But what would become of our little boy ? They would take him away, and bring him up a pagan like themselves."

This thought cast a shadow of gloom over their otherwise calm souls.

In the meantime, the boy, a beautiful child of six years, was playing with his toys in a corner of the house. He had overheard the words of his mother, and without saying what he was going to do, he went towards the fire, and put into it a piece of iron which was lying near. When it had become red-hot, the child took it into his hands, and, holding it by the part that was glowing, turned towards his mother without uttering even a sigh.

When the mother saw the hot iron burning her child's hand, she screamed, and, running towards him, took it out of his hand, saying : " What made you do such a dreadful thing ?"

" My mother," answered the boy, " I wanted to show you that I also can suffer for the love of God. Oh ! I will suffer whatever torment they inflict upon me as easily as I endured this one, that I may go to Heaven with you."

It was indeed the grace of God that had given that child such strength and courage.

Hist. of the Persecut. in Japan.

THE LITTLE CHINESE GIRL.

" In one of our missions," writes one of the apostles of China, " I met a little girl, only ten years old. She was well instructed in her religion, which is a rare thing among the Chinese of her age.

" ' Please, Father," she said to me, ' give me the Sacrament of Confirmation.'

" I thought the child was too young, and I told her to wait till some other time.

" ' O Father," she said, with an earnestness that moved me, ' might I not be confirmed now ?'

" ' Well, my child, if after your confirmation the mandarin should put you into prison, and ask you about your faith, what would you answer him ?'

" ' I would say to him, By the grace of God I am a Christian !'

" ' And if he should ask you to renounce your faith, what would you do ?'

" ' I would answer, Never.'

" ' But then if he should send for the executioners, and tell you that if you did not at once renounce your faith he would order them to cut off your head ?'

" ' Then I would say to him, Cut it off.'

" I saw from these words of the child that it was the Holy Ghost Himself Who had inspired them, and I no longer hesitated, but gave her the Holy Sacrament which she so earnestly asked."

Annals of Prop. of Faith, No. 95, p. 304.

THE VISION OF THEODOSIUS.

God has promised to give us " the crown of life " in Heaven if we serve Him faithfully while we are on earth.

The Abbot Theodosius tells us the following story of what happened to himself when he was a young man.

" One day, when I was at my prayers, I thought I

saw by my side a person who was surrounded with a bright light, brighter even than that of the sun. He took me by the hand, and said to me : ' Theodosius, come along with me, for you have to fight to gain a crown.'

" Then it seemed to me that he led me into a large hall full of people, who had come to see the fight ; some of them were clad in white, like the one who had brought me, and others wore dark garments, and were dreadful to look at.

" When I was placed in the middle of the hall, I saw standing there a negro of great size and strength. The man who had brought me to this place said to me : ' This is the one with whom you have to fight.'

" I was filled with great fear at these words, and I answered : ' O sir, it will be impossible for me to overcome this monster, for he is so much stronger than I am ; no man on earth could conquer him !'

" But he replied : ' You *must* fight with him : I brought you hither for that very purpose. Go, then, attack him courageously ; I will stand beside you and help you ; be not afraid.'

" When I heard these words I advanced towards my enemy. He was indeed very strong, and certainly would easily have gained the victory over me, but my guide came to my assistance, and the negro was soon overcome.

" As soon as he fell, the people in the hall who were in black began to cry out in dismay, and fled in haste ; but those who were clad in white sang a beautiful hymn of joy in honour of him who had helped me in the fight. Then they came forward to the place where I stood, and congratulated me on my success. ' Come

with us,' they said to me, ' and dwell for ever in our beautiful home, where you shall be filled with happiness which will never end.'

" As soon as I entered their dwelling, which was beautiful above all I had ever seen or had been able to imagine, he who had led me to fight, and who had helped me to gain the victory, put upon my head a beautiful crown, and said to me that this was the reward he had promised, and that it was now mine for ever, because I had overcome my adversary.

" When I returned to my senses, I began to think what was the meaning of the vision. God seemed to answer me in my heart, saying : ' The negro is Satan, who tries to destroy the souls of men ; the hall in which you had to fight represents the world ; the people whom you saw in the hall were the good and evil spirits, who are witnesses of your conflict ; he who assisted you to gain the victory is Myself ; and the crown given to you is the glory of Heaven, which I will give to everyone who is victorious over Satan and sin.' "

We also are engaged in this war. If we want to gain the crown of victory in Heaven, we must fight bravely during our short life in this world. God's grace will help us to gain it.

Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.

THE NOBLE WIFE AND MOTHER.

During the great persecutions in the early ages of the Church there lived in the city of Culusitana a woman named Victoria, who, with her husband and children, were Christians. Being brought before the

tribunal of the governor, and ordered to renounce their faith, the husband miserably yielded, but Victoria remained steadfast in her resolution to die for Christ rather than deny her religion. The judge condemned her to be burned to death.

When she was tied to the stake, and when already the flames were beginning to rise up around her, her husband, who was present with his children, being filled with agony on seeing her whom he loved about to leave him for ever, and trying to preserve her life by making her consent to the judge's orders, as he himself had done, cried out to her: "O my wife, what awful sufferings you are going to endure! What a frightful death! Oh, if you will not live for my sake, look at least upon the children you have borne, and have pity on them. Oh, why are you so hard-hearted as thus to abandon your husband, who has ever loved you, and your children, who you always said were dear to you? Look, I beg of you—look on me again; look at these little ones of ours, and for our sakes obey the commands of the judge; then he will make us all both happy and rich."

With these and similar words did that wretched man try to move the constancy of that admirable woman. But God's grace was stronger within her than a wife or a mother's love, and she cried out with a loud voice: "Jesus Christ has said: 'He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth husband or wife more than Me is not worthy of Me." I indeed love you with the love of an affectionate wife and mother, but I love God more. To Him I leave you; into the hands of His mercy I commend my soul, that I

may receive from Him the hundredfold reward He has promised to those who leave husband and children for His sake."

These were the last words she uttered, as the fire consumed all that was mortal in her; then her pure soul rose up to God, her Heavenly Father, for Whose sake and the sake of the faith He had bestowed upon her she had made the sacrifice of her life.

VI. On Corresponding with God's Grace.

God has His own ways of giving us His grace. Oh, happy are those who never refuse to hear His voice, and accept His grace when He offers it to them.

ST. PAUL THE SIMPLE'S VISION.

St. Paul, called the Simple, on account of his child-like simplicity, was a disciple of the great St. Antony. God gave him the special gift of being able to see what was taking place in the hearts of men as clearly as if he saw it with his bodily eyes.

One day he was sitting at the door of the church looking at the people who were going in. Suddenly he began to weep and to strike his breast, as those do who are in great sorrow.

The people asked him what was the matter with him, but he would not give them any answer.

They told him to go into the church, but he did not go. He still remained in the same place, weeping and sighing, and striking his breast.

When Holy Mass was over, and the people began to come out again, St. Paul looked at each of them

as they passed near him. All at once he began to smile, and to give way to outward marks of very great joy. His tears of sorrow gave place to those of gladness, and he began to skip about like a little child.

Those who were acquainted with him were not surprised at this, because they knew his great simplicity, and only smiled as they saw him acting in this way

Going forward to a certain man, a stranger, who was making his way through the crowd, he took him aside and said to him :

" Tell me what happened to you while you were in the church. For when you went in your soul was black and frightful to behold, and now it is beautiful and bright, and the Holy Spirit of God is in it : tell me how this change took place."

The stranger was filled with surprise when he saw that the secrets of his heart had thus been made known. He answered without hesitating : " I am a great sinner. When I went into the church I had no sorrow for my sins ; I went in because I had nothing else to do, and because I saw so many others going in.

" When I entered I heard the preacher say these words of Isaias : ' Wash, and be made clean ; and if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.' When I heard these words, there was something in my heart that said to me : ' These words are for you.' So I asked God to pardon me. I went to Confession immediately, confessed my many crimes, and obtained absolution. From the moment that the priest pronounced over me the words of God's pardon, I felt so full of joy : I feel as if I can

now call Heaven my country and God my Father." Saying this, he went away.

St. Paul also went home filled with a holy joy, and admiring the wonderful ways of God in bringing home to the fold His wandering children.

THE STORY OF A CONVERSION.

This is a little story of how one who was brought up in the Protestant religion was converted to the Faith. It is he himself who tells us about it.

" My father was a civil officer in Dresden in moderate circumstances. Unfortunately, I lost both my parents at an early age. I inherited from them a small estate, which my brother, who was many years my senior, and who had married a rich wife, managed for me, as my guardian. He put me as an apprentice under a lithographer, secured for me a room in an attic, and whenever I needed money he gave me what I wanted ; further than this, he did not trouble himself about me.

" In this abandonment, I often passed many sad hours. Whenever my heart was heavier than usual, I went to the Catholic church, and knelt on the altar steps ; for, although I had never spoken to anyone on the subject, I felt that God was present there in quite a different manner from what He was in the Protestant churches which I regularly attended for sermon on Sundays, but there was nothing to retain me when the sermon was over and the music had ceased.

" One day my guardian declared to me, as he handed me some money, that my capital was used up, his guardianship was at an end, and that for

the future I should have to provide for myself. I was thunderstruck at these words, but kept back my tears, and went away dejected and silent to my attic-room. Henceforth I lived on bread and water, but still my money rapidly dwindled away, and one morning I awoke to find that I had barely the price of a little loaf remaining. It was impossible for me to ask anything from my brother, who had shown himself so heartless to me. In my sorrow I went to the Catholic church, where I found nobody. I knelt down near the altar, and poured out my sorrows before the merciful Lord, Who I felt was there.

"On a sudden there arose a great calm within me. I went to the workshop as usual, and resumed my work. Hardly had I begun when the master sent for me, and told me that he was so well satisfied with my work that for the future he would pay me weekly wages. Strange to say, the idea of becoming a Catholic had never yet entered my mind, although I continued to practise the devotion of which I have told you.

"By the time that I had reached the age of eighteen I had laid up enough money to enable me to attend the Academy of Munich. I was, one cold November evening, seated at a window, when I heard the ringing of a little bell, and saw the Blessed Sacrament carried to a sick person, accompanied by two servers bearing lanterns. On other occasions I had always observed a number of persons following the priest in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; but now I saw no one: the cold rain mixed with snow seemed to have kept everyone within doors.

"Then the thought came into my mind that, since there was no Catholic person accompanying the priest, I myself must go and show honour to my Lord. I left my place at the window, and followed the priest bareheaded to the narrow street, where, as usual, before entering the house of the sick, he turned to give the benediction. Surprised, probably, at finding me alone before him, he stood for a little time holding up the Blessed Sacrament with his hands.

"I suddenly felt in the depths of my soul that I stood there in the presence of my God; I fell on my knees, and when I rose again, and was alone, my determination had been taken to become a Catholic. Next day I sought out a priest to instruct me, and soon, thanks be to God, was received into the Church, of which I have tried to be a worthy member."

Ave Maria, vol. xviii., p. 93.

GOD'S VOICE IN THE TEMPEST.

In a great castle in the territory of Rhenish Prussia a child was born, who at his baptism received the name of Norbert.

This child from his birth had all the advantages the world could give him. He was the heir of great wealth, and the descendant of a noble family. As he grew up, Nature added every grace of body and mind, which made him the centre of attraction of all the people—not only of those near his home, but of those also who lived afar off.

The flattery of the world for a time deceived him. In the midst of his enjoyments and pleasures, he forgot God, and placed all his affections on the glory

which the world poured upon him. One season of festivity followed another without ceasing, carrying him always still further onward on the way to ruin.

Yet he felt within his heart a great want ; he could not tell what it was, but he was not perfectly happy. His conscience also told him that the pleasures he sought after so eagerly were vain and empty. But he shut his ears to that voice of God, and continued to follow the path of evil he had chosen.

One day, in the year 1114, he was riding towards a village called Vreden. His thoughts were fixed on the pleasures and amusements he was about to enjoy. To reach Vreden he had to pass through a desert place eighteen miles in length. He had only one servant with him.

When they had ridden about half that distance, they were suddenly overtaken by a terrible thunder-storm.

The servant, full of terror, cried out : " Come back ! come back ! for the hand of God is against thee."

Hardly had he said these words when a loud clap of thunder was heard, and a ball of fire fell at his horse's feet, burning the grass and tearing up the earth around them. The horse, thus frightened, threw its rider, who lay on the plain for nearly an hour like one dead.

Then, coming to himself, he cried out to God like another St. Paul : " Lord, what dost Thou wish me to do ?"

At these words, he heard as it were a voice in his soul distinctly saying to him : " Turn away from evil and do good ; seek after peace and pursue it."

As soon as he was able to rise from the ground, he took the resolution of at once forsaking the world and all its vanities, and living for God alone and the salvation of his soul. He returned to his native city, and entered a monastery, where he spent many years in silence and prayer, weeping for his past sins and asking God for mercy.

Thus in an instant did the grace of God change the heart of St. Norbert. He became a Saint and the founder of a great religious order in the Church which, by its zeal for the conversion of sinners, has gained many souls to God. *Life of St. Norbert.*

TOUCHED BY GRACE.

St. Louis Bertrand was one day walking with some of his companions on a country road in the neighbourhood of his monastery. Their conversation was on pious subjects ; for, having their minds and hearts in Heaven, their words also were about the things of Heaven.

It happened that a young man was walking a little distance behind them. Under his cloak he carried a sword, and his whole appearance spoke of a man under the influence of some great passion.

The religious, without taking any heed of the young man's presence, continued to speak aloud as before. The man was sufficiently near them to hear all they said.

The Holy Ghost, Who wished to give a special grace to him, made use of their words to touch his heart. In a short time the young man went up to them, and, throwing away the weapon he had con-

cealed under his clothing, cast himself on his knees before St. Louis.

" Ah, my Father," he cried out, " may God reward you in Heaven for what you have done for me to-day !"

The good Father looked at the man kneeling before him, and asked him what had happened to him.

" I was on my way to take revenge on an enemy who had injured me. But the words I have just now heard from your lips have so changed my heart that I am now on my knees to ask the pardon of God."

" Do you forgive him who has injured you, my child ?"

" Yes, Father, from my inmost soul."

" Then God will also forgive you."

St. Louis then returned thanks to God, Who had been pleased to show His mercy to a sinner who had so grievously offended Him.

" See, my brothers," he said to those who accompanied him—" see how the Holy Ghost makes use of the simplest means to do His greatest works and bestow His choicest graces on His children."

The poor sinner became reconciled to God, and to the end of his days persevered in the new life of grace so wonderfully given him.

Life of St. Louis Bertrand.

" I CAN BE GOD'S CHILD AT ONCE."

In the days of the Emperor Theodosius two young gentlemen who belonged to his Court went for a short time into the country for their amusement.

As they passed by a certain monastery, curiosity

led them to the gates. "I wonder," said one of them, "what kind of life these monks lead. Let us go in and see."

So they went in, and were kindly received by the Superior and the brethren.

The simplicity and silence and peace that reigned in that holy abode, and the look of happiness that shone on the faces of the monks, made a wonderful impression on them; it was so different from the kind of life to which they had been accustomed

One of them, going into a monk's cell, found a book, which, out of curiosity, he began to read. It was the Life of St. Antony, and contained an account of what that holy hermit did for God. As he read it his own heart was filled with the desire to imitate him.

When he returned to his companion, he said: "Tell me, what do we hope to gain by all our labours in the Emperor's service? At most we can only expect to secure his friendship, and we are not certain even to obtain that. But if I wish, I can become God's friend at this very moment, and continue to be His friend for all eternity; even more, I can be His child."

To this his companion answered nothing. After a few moments' silence the other one said: "O my dear friend, I have quite made up my mind to leave the Imperial Court for ever. From this moment I am going to serve God alone; and that you may know how earnest I am about it, I will begin at once to do so. If you do not like to follow my example, I beg of you not to hinder me from fulfilling this resolution."

His companion answered: "No; you shall not be alone. I also will begin like yourself—begin from this moment to serve God as these holy men do who live here."

They both went to the Superior, who received them with great joy, and they consecrated themselves for ever to the service of God.

Thus did the grace of God make use of a pious book to lead souls filled with the vanity of this world to a life of holiness and virtue. ST. AUGUSTINE.

"OUR HELP IS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD."

When St. Romuald was a young man he led a very worldly life, because his father, who was a man of the world, did not watch over him when he was a child.

But his Father in Heaven, Who had chosen him for a great work in His Church, was watching over him, and spoke to his heart by His grace. At the age of twenty years he entered a monastery to do penance for his sins.

But Satan also went into the monastery with him. He could not allow a soul thus to escape him, without making every effort to capture him again. So, when the days of his first fervour had passed by, the evil spirit filled his mind with temptations to melancholy. The thought of his former life, and the pleasures he had enjoyed came back to him in his solitude, and the desire of returning to the world haunted him wherever he went.

But God was at his side. Romuald heard His voice speaking to his heart. It seemed to say to him, "Pray, pray."

"O my most sweet Jesus," cried out the holy man, "why hast Thou forsaken me? Hast Thou, then, given me over entirely into the hands of my enemy?"

Scarcely had he said these words when he felt his heart at peace. Satan had been conquered and had fled, and Romuald was no longer troubled by these dismal thoughts. *Lives of the Saints*, Feb. 7.

THE BROTHERS OF ST. BERNARD.

When St. Bernard first conceived the idea of retiring from the world, that he might serve God more faithfully in the religious life, he was not alone, for all his brothers, with the exception of the youngest, and many of his friends, resolved to follow his example.

One of his brothers, whose name was Andrew, and whose martial spirit was more adapted for a life of arms than for the solitude of the monastery, at first refused to join him, and requested time for deliberation.

When he was thinking over what he would do, he thought he saw standing before him his mother, who had instilled into his mind the first seeds of religion in his infancy.

She wore on her face a sweet smile, and beckoned on him to follow his brothers in the path they had chosen.

He at once did so, and became an eminent Saint.

So we also, when we hear the voice of God inviting us to perfection or to do what is most beneficial to our spiritual interest, and when we are, as it were, deliberating whether or not we will follow the in-

spirations of grace, let us think that we see near us our own heavenly Mother Mary, and that we see her smiling on us and beckoning on us to follow these inspirations, and we shall certainly choose the better part.

VII. The Danger of neglecting God's Grace.

There are many who have received from God great graces, and yet have lost their souls. This was because they would not correspond with these graces. You must be careful, my child, never to refuse God's grace, because terrible is the misfortune that befalls those who do not accept it when He offers it to them.

ST. FRANCIS AND THE SPANISH GENTLEMAN.

In the days of St. Francis Borgia there lived in Spain a gentleman who gave himself up to very great sins. Suddenly, in the midst of his evil ways, a terrible illness came upon him.

He had near him some friends who had remained faithful in their duties to God. When they saw that his sickness was dangerous, they spoke to him of the necessity of being reconciled to God, lest death should come and take him away unprepared.

But he laughed at them, and said: "There is plenty of time. Besides, I am not so ill as you imagine."

But his friends continued to speak to him of the necessity of going to Confession, saying to him that the doctors had declared his case hopeless.

As soon as the young man heard that word

Confession, he burst forth into angry words, and said that he would never go to Confession, even although he was sure that death was at hand.

St. Francis Borgia was told about the man's obstinacy, and, seeing the danger he was in of losing his soul, knelt down before a crucifix, and besought our dear Lord, with tears in his eyes, not to allow that soul to perish.

As he was thus praying for the poor sinner, a voice seemed to come forth from the crucifix, saying : " Go, Francis, and visit him, and exhort him to repent."

St. Francis went immediately with great joy, thinking that as God Himself had sent him, he was sure of obtaining his salvation. But although he spoke to him for a long time, the sinner would not hear of making his Confession.

The Saint left the room and returned to the church. He knelt down as before, and prayed with still greater fervour for his conversion.

The same voice again spoke to him : " Go back once more to the dying man ; take your crucifix with you. He certainly must have taken a firm resolution to lose his poor soul, if his heart is not melted at the sight of the sufferings I underwent for him."

St. Francis returned to the sick man's room. " I am come again to ask you, in the name of Jesus, Who died for you, that you repent of your sins, and so escape the eternal pains of hell."

Still the young man refused to listen to him.

Francis then taking the crucifix he had brought with him, placed it before the dying man's eyes.

At that moment, by a miracle of God's mercy, the figure on the cross appeared as if covered with wounds and blood, as Jesus Himself had been when dying on the cross.

" Ah, my child," said the Saint, " look how Jesus loves you, although you have so grievously sinned against Him ! Oh, do not refuse this special grace ! Return to Him now, and He will forgive you and take you to His home in Heaven."

But all his exhortations were in vain. The man refused to accept this great grace, and St. Francis saw him die in his sins, a victim to his obstinacy, in refusing to make use of the grace God had in such a special manner sent him for his salvation.

O my child, be careful always to make use of the graces God sends you.

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM.

We read in the holy Gospels that on one occasion Our Lord Jesus Christ was coming down with His disciples from the Mountain of Olives to Jerusalem. It was a short time before His Passion.

" When He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying : Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not.

" The days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee ; and they shall not leave in thee a stone

upon a stone, because thou hast not known the day of thy visitation."

Not long afterwards Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people killed or reduced to slavery, in punishment for their rejection of the grace of God, their neglect in refusing to listen to His beloved Son Jesus, and the crime they had committed in putting Him to death.

My child, the sin we commit in refusing to accept God's grace when He offers it to us is equally great, and, if we repent not, will most certainly endanger our salvation ; and when, by despising the grace of God, we fall into a grievous sin, we, as St. Paul tells, crucify again, as far as is in our power, the Lord of Glory. Be careful, then, never to refuse the grace of God, since your salvation depends upon your corresponding with it.

XXXVIII

BAPTISM

I. What Baptism is, and its Necessity.

Baptism is a Sacrament which cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians, children of God, and members of the Church.

In the first place, Baptism cleanses us from original sin. We have seen already that original sin is that guilt and stain of sin which we inherit from Adam, who was the origin and head of all mankind, and the sin he committed was that of disobedience when he ate the forbidden fruit.

Baptism is the Sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ for the remission of original sin. Those who are not baptized can never see God in Heaven.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS.

Jesus Christ, in his discourse with Nicodemus, clearly teaches us how necessary Baptism is to us if we desire to enter Heaven.

We read in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel: "And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night, and said to him: Rabbi, we know that Thou art come a teacher from God; for

no man can do these signs which Thou dost, unless God be with him.

" Jesus, answering, said to him : Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

" Nicodemus said to Him : How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again ?

" Jesus answered : Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh : and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Wonder not, that I say to thee, you must be born again. The Spirit breatheth where He will ; and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh and whither He goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

" Nicodemus answered, and said to Him : How can these things be done ?

" Jesus answered, and said to him : Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things ?" Then Jesus continued His instruction to him, showing to him the mission entrusted to Himself by His Heavenly Father, and the necessity of believing in His words.

The Fathers of the Church, explaining these words of Our Lord, " Unless a man be born again," say : " By these words our Saviour hath declared the necessity of Baptism ; and by the word ' water ' it is evident that the application of it is necessary with the words (Matt. xxviii. 19) ' baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ' " (Commentary in the Douay Bible on St. John iii.).

THE PIOUS MOTHER'S DESOLATION.

The great St. Augustine, Doctor of the Church, relates the following example :

" A pious mother had a little boy, who at the time we write was receiving his nourishment at her breast. Suddenly he died, and his mother was filled with the most profound grief—not so much at the death of her child, but because he had died without Baptism.

" Full of hope in God's goodness, and confiding in the power of the prayers of God's Saints, she carried his body to the Church of St. Stephen, the first martyr, and besought him with earnest prayers to intercede for him. " O holy martyr of Jesus Christ !" she exclaimed, " you see that now I cannot receive any consolation, for I cannot hope ever to see my beloved child again, since he has been taken from me without the grace of Baptism, which alone can procure for him the happiness of Heaven. Oh, pray that he may be restored to me, in order that he may receive that great Sacrament, and that he may inherit the promises made to the children of God ! You know that this is my only desire."

No sooner had she uttered this prayer than the boy showed signs of life ; his eyes were opened, and he once more gazed upon his mother. As soon as she perceived that he had returned to life, she raised him in her arms and hastened with him to the Church.

The Bishop of the city met her as she entered, and having listened to her story, himself conferred upon the child the Sacrament of Baptism, as also that of Confirmation.

When the ceremony was ended, the child died for the second time, and his mother bore him to the tomb as if she were carrying an angel into Heaven.

O my child, how great is the consolation of those who see their children die in their baptismal innocence!

HAUTRIEVE: *Catech.* ix. 264.

ST. LOUIS OF FRANCE'S ESTEEM FOR BAPTISM.

The zeal of this holy King for the salvation of souls made him daily pray to God for the conversion of those who did not as yet know Him.

"Oh, how great would be my joy if I could only be godfather to a Mussulman Prince!" he used often to say.

One day, while assisting at the Baptism of a Jewish convert in the Church of St. Denis, near Paris, he spoke thus to a number of unbelievers of high rank who had been invited to assist at this solemn ceremony: "Tell your masters from me that I would willingly spend the remaining days of my life in one of their deepest dungeons if only I could obtain from God their conversion, and that of their people, and make them by Baptism His children and the heirs of His kingdom."

HAUTRIEVE: *Catech.* ix. 265.

THE SOUL OF A LITTLE CHILD SAVED.

It happened in one of the hospitals of Paris that a woman gave birth to a child whom the doctors declared had only a few minutes to live. Those who were attending the mother thought only of those things that were necessary to her condition

and to the bodily wants of the child, but no one thought of procuring for the little one the Sacrament of Baptism.

A young man full of faith, who was at the time in a ward not far distant, hearing of the doctors' decision, immediately hastened to the place where they were attending to the child, and cried out: "Go at once and get a priest to come to baptize it." But his words were received with derision.

Then the young man himself, seeing that there was no time to lose, poured water upon the head of the child, baptizing it in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

A few minutes afterwards the child died, and another soul was joined to the company of the blessed in Heaven. GUILLOIS: *Exp. du Catech. iii.*

II. BAPTISM MAKES US THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

By Baptism you were made God's own child, and this not in name only, but truly and really. Hence St. John says to us: "Behold what manner of charity the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called, and should be, the sons of God."

THE BAPTISM OF CLOVIS.

Clovis, King of the Francs, while yet a pagan was married to Clotildis, a Christian lady of noble rank, in the year 493.

In the following year a son was born to them, and Clotildis, desiring to consecrate the child to God by Baptism, asked the King to grant her this favour. It was with reluctance that he acceded

to her request, for he was devoted to the worship of the pagan divinities, and had hitherto turned a deaf ear to the exhortation she had so frequently made him to renounce them.

By her orders the church was decorated with great magnificence. Hangings of the richest silks and garlands of the choicest flowers adorned the walls, and the ceremonies of the sacred rite were performed with the greatest pomp, for the Queen hoped by this outward display to gain that influence over the King which all her words had failed to effect.

The child received the name of Ingomer. He did not long survive, for within a week of his Baptism God took him to Himself.

The King was filled with grief and anger at the death of the boy, and said reproachfully to his wife : " If only the child had been consecrated to my gods, he now would be yet alive ; but because he was baptized in the name of your God, he infallibly died."

The only answer the Queen made was : " I give thanks to Almighty God, the Creator of all things Who has judged me not unworthy of seeing the fruit of my womb admitted into His eternal kingdom. The loss of my beloved child has not pierced my heart with grief, but has, on the contrary, filled it with great joy, because I know that the little children whom God calls to Himself in their innocence will be for ever happy in His presence."

The Queen in course of time gave birth to another son, who was likewise baptized. He received thename of Clodomir. This child also soon after his Baptism became ill, and the anger of the King was enkindled anew. " How could it be otherwise ?" he ex-

claimed in his despair. " He, too, must die like his brother, because he was baptized in the name of your Christ."

But Clotildis prayed to God to spare the life of the child, and the boy recovered.

Not long after this was fought the Battle of Tolbiac, which was gained by Clovis, who from that day resolved to abjure paganism and embrace Christianity.

The historian Alcuin thus relates the history of his Baptism: " As the King returned, full of joy, from his expedition against the Alamanni, he met Vedastus, a holy solitary who dwelt on the banks of the Meuse. Him he brought along with him to the city of Rheims, that he might receive from him on the way instructions in the Faith, and be prepared for Baptism.

In the meantime St. Remigius, Bishop of that city, having learned from Clotildis the intentions of the King, went forth to meet him on his arrival, and for some time continued the instructions St. Vedastus had begun ; and when he considered him sufficiently instructed, he besought him to make known openly before the whole world his conversion to the Faith.

" Most holy Father," he answered, " I am ready. One consideration only yet keeps me back. My people, the Francs, may not be willing to follow me, and may not wish to abandon the worship of the gods. Let me, therefore, in the first place, assemble them together. I will speak to them the things you have spoken to me, and endeavour to persuade them to follow my example."

When they had come together, and when Clovis

entered the assembly to speak to them, they all cried out with one voice : " Most pious King, we also, one and all, are resolved to renounce the mortal gods ; we will worship only the immortal God Whom Remigius adores."

On hearing these words the holy Bishop was filled with unspeakable joy, and immediately began to prepare them for Baptism. The festival of Christmas of that year, 496, was the day chosen for the administration of the solemn rite, which was to be celebrated with the greatest pomp and magnificence.

When the appointed day came, an immense multitude congregated around the church to await the arrival of Clovis and the many thousands of catechumens who were to be baptized along with him. Little children in rich garments strewed the pathways and streets with sweet-smelling flowers. Young girls covered with long white veils walked in procession towards the place prepared for the ceremony, singing hymns joyfully to the glory of God. On one side were to be seen charioteers clad in splendid costumes, who drove their spirited horses as if in the procession of some great conqueror. On the other side, saintly religious were engaged in explaining to the people the mysteries of the Christian Faith. The sacred names of God and of His Divine Son Jesus were everywhere heard above the enthusiastic greetings of the multitudes, uttered by lips which had until that time only spoken the names of the pagan divinities. The streets through which the procession was to pass were hung with the richest draperies festooned with garlands of sweet-

smelling herbs. Within the church itself shone innumerable lights, which dispelled the approaching darkness, and illuminated the edifice with a noon-day brilliancy, while clouds of perfumed incense ascended heavenwards and enbalmed the atmosphere.

Suddenly the King, led by the hand of Remigius in his pontifical garments, and followed by those who were to receive the august rite along with him, were seen to approach the church. When they reached the entrance, the King, overcome by his emotion, and filled with awe at the magnificence that met his eyes, turned towards the Bishop, and said : " My Father, is this the kingdom of Heaven you promised me ?"

" No, my son," replied the Archbishop ; " it is only the entrance to the way which leads to it."

All those who accompanied the King shared in his emotion, and imagined, as he had done, that Heaven itself could not surpass all they saw.

Clovis, having made aloud his profession of faith, approached the sacred font, near which Remigius stood. As the Prelate was preparing to pour upon him the waters of Baptism, behold, a snow-white dove was seen to enter, bearing in its beak a phial of oil. Remigius, reverently taking into his hand the phial sent from Heaven, poured from it a few drops of the liquid it contained upon the head of the King. The bird then flew away heavenwards, and was seen no more.

As the King stood upright at the font ready to receive Baptism, Remigius said to him : " Bow thy head, bold Sicambre ; burn that which thou hast worshipped, and worship that which thou hast burned."

When the sacred water had been poured over him, he was clad in the white linen garment of the neophyte, and immediately thereafter, in the presence of all the people, delivered from their chains all the prisoners whom he had taken on the plains of Tolbiac.

Then arose from the choir of the bards this anthem : " O Clovis, there is no earthly power that can equal thine, for the aureola of Christianity shines around thy head. In one hand thou dost bear the conqueror's sword, and the other leans upon the Cross."

From the Bollandists and the History of the Church.

GOD'S CHILD.

St. Louis, King of France, was a great Saint. Although the ruler of a mighty nation, he was not proud, because he remembered that all worldly greatness must soon pass away, and he thought only of that eternal kingdom which God has promised to give to those who serve Him on earth.

He taught his children to do the same. As each of them was brought home from the church on the day of his Baptism, he would take him into his arms with great joy, and embrace him tenderly, saying : " Dear little one, until now you were only *my* child, but to-day, by Baptism, God has made you *His* child. May His holy Name be blessed for ever !"

ST. CHARLES BORROMEO'S PRAYER.

When St. Charles was a little boy, he found great delight in speaking to God. " O my God," he was often heard to say, " how happy I am when I call

to mind that Thou art my Father, and that I am Thy own child. Jesus is my Brother, and His own dear Mother Mary is my Mother, too ! O my God, I give myself entirely to Thee ! Take me into Thy arms, O my dear Heavenly Father, and bless me."

THE EMPEROR'S STAG.

One of the ancient Roman Emperors had a pet stag, which used to come and feed out of his hand, and lived in the gardens around his palace.

No one dared to touch it, because everyone knew that it belonged to the Emperor. But being afraid that huntsmen who did not know this might kill it if they saw it in the forest, the Emperor made a collar of gold, and put it round the stag's neck. On the collar were these words : " I belong to the Emperor : do not touch me."

When people saw these words they let the stag alone.

My child, God has written these words on your soul : " I belong to God : let no one touch me." So when temptation comes near you, think on these words, and tell Satan to depart, because you belong not to him, but to God.

THE LITTLE GIRL MIRIAM.

In the year 1876 Sister Helen, of the Order of St. Francis, who had gone to foreign parts to help to gain souls to God, was one day visiting a lady who was one of the greatest benefactors of the convent.

This lady had in her house as servant-maid a little Mohammedan negress.

When the lady and visitor had partaken of their simple repast, the humble girl quietly, without being perceived by her mistress, approached the Sister, and, taking her by her hand, pressed it, and whispered in her ear : " I want to be a Christian."

" Take courage, my child," said Sister Helen, in the same low voice. " God will help you."

This poor child had been from her childhood the slave of cruel masters, who not only treated her unkindly, but heaped upon her untold cruelties. When she left them, she fortunately found her way into the service of Madame B——, the kind benefactress of the convent in Cairo.

She frequently accompanied her mistress to the Church of St. Catherine, at Alexandria, and listened with earnest attention to the sermons and instructions she there heard. Without being able to understand everything that was said, she felt within her a powerful attraction for the Christian religion.

During the Christmas festivities she would spend whole hours prostrate in prayer before the representation of the crib of Bethlehem, adoring Him Who had come into this world to redeem mankind, although as yet she did not know Him. What were the words she then uttered, or the prayers she then said ? God alone knows. But it was only right to suppose that the Divine Child Jesus, in the humility and sufferings of His manger, would be the first to speak to the heart of Miriam, and give consolation to her who had never known anything in life but sorrow and tears. Along with the rest of the faithful, she would approach the crib,

and kiss devoutly the feet of the image of Jesus lying on His bed of straw; often, too, would she say to herself: "Why cannot I also be as they are?"

The humble Franciscan sister was for her God's angel, and she always found peace in her soul when she spoke to her, and told her all her troubles.

One evening Miriam, while leaning on a window-sill, fell asleep. Near to where she stood was a lamp burning. By a sudden movement in her sleep she fell against the lamp, and her garments became ignited, and in an instant she was enveloped in flames. The unfortunate child uttered piercing screams, but before help arrived her body was terribly burned.

Madame B——, overwhelmed with grief at this accident, sent in haste to the convent in Cairo to obtain the help of the Sisters. Two of them returned with the messenger, and carried the girl with them to the convent. The Mother Superior, Sister Catherine, was waiting to receive her, and assured her that nothing would be left undone to procure her recovery.

Miriam turned her weeping eyes towards her, and, joining her hands together, said: "My Mother, it can only be for a few days longer; but before I go, I beseech you to grant me one only favour: let me be baptized."

The Reverend Mother was filled with emotion at these words, and immediately sent for the chaplain of the convent. Thinking that she was like the other converts whom he was daily bringing to God, he began, as usual, to explain to her the truths of

our holy Faith. But Miriam knew all these truths already. He then began to exhort her to be resigned in this calamity to the Holy Will of God. Her answers filled him with amazement. "One must suffer here," she said, "if he wishes to be crowned hereafter. Is it not necessary that the leaves must fall in the autumn before the tree can bring forth the green leaves of the spring? In a few hours I hope to possess God, and to be eternally happy with Him." The good Father fervently thanked God for the extraordinary graces He had given to this privileged soul.

When the priest was administering to her the Sacrament of Baptism, and had asked by what name she desired to be called, she answered: "Alexandrina," and under this name the regenerating waters flowed over her.

On the third day after her Baptism she made her first Communion, which was also to be her last. Then she asked the sisters to place her on the cold ground, as if to receive some slight relief in the burning pain that consumed her. Soon afterwards her agony began.

Holding the crucifix close to her breast, she said: "Oh, it is all over now! I am going to meet my Jesus, whom I love so much. I am going," she added; "I am going, and Mary, my heavenly Mother, is with me."

These were her last words, and her pure soul entered that haven of peace where no sorrow can be found. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

La Charité enseignée aux Enfans, p. 175.

III. Baptism makes us Christians and Members of God's Church.

At the moment of your Baptism, when God made you His child, he bestowed on you one of the most precious of His gifts. He gave you the gift of the Faith—that is, he made you a Christian and a member of His one true Catholic Church.

Almighty as God is, my child, He could not have given you a greater gift than this one which on the day of your Baptism he gave to you. How careful, then, you should be, to make good use of this gift, for by doing so you will most certainly obtain possession of the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter. With what care, also, you should watch that you may not expose it to be lost, for without it you could never see Heaven nor God. Like the holy martyrs, you should be willing to endure even death itself rather than renounce it.

"I am a Christian."

Eusebius the historian relates that a certain martyr, when he was asked by the tyrant what country he belonged to, and what his name was, and whether he was a slave or a freeman, answered each question in these words: "I am a Christian." By this he wished to signify that the name of Christian was so great as to include every other distinction or title of honour.

The Companion of the Angels.

When St. Francis of Sales was baptized, he was carried from the church and placed in his pious

mother's arms. She, with great tenderness, pressed him to her heart, saying, as the tears of joy flowed from her eyes : " Now you are the companion of the angels ; now you are the brother of Jesus Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost and a member of the Catholic Church ; now you are God's child, and you must for ever belong to Him."

Would that every Christian mother would say the same words !

ST. AGATHA'S ANSWER TO THE TYRANT.

When the Pretor Quintilianus was endeavouring to make St. Agatha deny her faith and worship the gods of the pagans, he said to her : " Are you not ashamed, O Agatha, you who are born of so noble a parentage, to lead the miserable and servile life of the Christians ?"

Agatha answered : " The lowliness and the practice of the Christian life is more precious than all the wealth and the high estate of kings."

Since the gift of the true Faith is so precious, and also so necessary for you, how careful you should be not to lose it. It is the most valuable thing you possess in this world, because without it you can never see God nor enter into His kingdom.

THE LOST JEWEL.

At the beginning of this century there lived in a college near Amiens, in France, a servant of God called Brother Firmin.

Once, when he had been sent to Paris on some business, and was about to return home, some one

confided to his care a little box, saying : " Brother Firmin, take care of this box, because it contains a jewel of great value."

On the way he lost it. When he reached home and told his companions what had happened, they all cried out : " Oh, what a misfortune it is to have lost an object of such value !"

The good brother smiled when he saw them looking so disappointed. " O my friends," he said, " don't call it a misfortune ; it is only an accident. There is only one thing that deserves the name of misfortune, and that is the loss of the one true Faith, which will make us lose God and Heaven for ever."

Keep this thought always before your mind, my child ; it will enable you to preserve all your lifetime that great gift of the true Faith which God has given you in your Baptism, and which will procure for you when you die entrance into the eternal joys of Heaven.

IV. Baptism makes us Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.

My child, on the day of your Baptism, God, in making you His own child chose you from among that immense multitude who do not know Him, and made you a Christian, a member of His Church on earth, and also an heir to the glory of Heaven hereafter Oh, how great has been God's love for you ! how your heart ought to glow with gratitude to Him for such a glorious privilege !

LOUIS THE LITTLE ORPHAN.

There was a little boy called Louis, who had lost his father and mother, and was left alone in the world. His parents had been very pious Christians, and had taught their son that he was in this world to please God alone, and that he was God's child more than theirs.

It was some time before he found any employment ; but at length a farmer engaged him to take care of his cattle.

When Sunday came Louis asked permission to go to Mass ; but his master refused to allow him. He begged of him again and again, but this made the man only the more angry ; he struck him very cruelly with a stick, and told him to go away from his house and never return.

Louis then went to the church and assisted devoutly at Holy Mass, although he was suffering much from the blows he had received.

When Mass was ended, he left the church and wandered for some time on the highway. He had now no place to shelter him, and he was cold, hungry, and weary. He sat down to rest on a cold stone by the side of the road, and tears fell from his eyes as he thought of his sad lot. " O my God," he prayed, " take pity on me."

At that moment a man was passing by in a carriage, and, seeing the poor boy alone and weeping, stopped to speak to him, and when he heard his story and saw the wretched condition in which he was, he took him with him to his own house. " See, I have brought you a truly Christian boy," he said to his

wife. "Give him something to eat, for he is very hungry." Then he told her the boy's history as he had learned it from the boy himself.

The good lady wept as she listened to the sad story. She led the boy into a magnificent room and gave him what he needed for his present wants, and also made him stay with them for a few days.

The lady and gentleman were so much pleased with his gentle manners and his piety that they agreed to adopt him as their own child. When the boy heard of his good fortune he fell on his knees, and his tears told them more eloquently than words could how grateful he was to them for their generosity. From that moment his one thought was how he could best please them; and when old age came upon them he was their consolation and their joy.

My child, this beautiful story is your own history. When you came into this world you were the slave of Satan, who is indeed a cruel master. Now God, who is the King of Heaven, from His high throne of glory, saw you when you were in the service of the devil, and He came and asked you if you would be His child. You said to Him that you would, and that you would serve Him all the days of your life if only He would make you His child.

Then He took off the tattered garments of sin, and washed your soul in the waters of Baptism, that even the angels in Heaven were in rapture when they saw you. Then He put on you the beautiful shining garments of His holy grace, and made you dwell in His own house—that is, His Church—where you had everything you could desire to make you

holy and good; and He has promised you that if you serve Him to the end of your life He will make you happy with Himself in Heaven.

THE POOR BOY OF ANDERLECH.

In a little village near Brussels, called Anderlech, St. Guido was born about the middle of the tenth century. His parents were very poor, and Guido grew up in the midst of poverty, so that he used to be called "the poor boy of Anderlech."

His father, who was a very holy man, taught him to fear God, and to accept lovingly from Him the state of poverty in which he was born.

"My dear son," he would often say to him, "we are very poor, it is true; but we shall be rich in Heaven for ever, if we live in the fear of God and do good."

Guido kept these words in his heart, and when tempted to complain of his hard lot, he used to console himself by saying: "Yes, I am poor, but why should I complain? Am I not the heir of a great and eternal kingdom? God is my Father; He has promised to give me His own kingdom, and that is enough."

You also, my child, can say the same words, for you are the child of God, since you are a Christian.

V. The Baptism by Water.

Baptism is given by pouring water on the head of the child, saying at the same time these words: "I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

"O BLACK ROBE, WASH ME ON THE HEAD!"

Father Odin, who in days long gone by had accomplished immense good to souls in the missions of America, relates to us the following beautiful story.

"On my return from a short journey I had made in quest of souls, I observed a number of savages engaged in hunting. As soon as they perceived me, they ran towards me, crying with joy, and seizing me by the hand.

"'Good-morning, Black Robe,' they said; 'we are so pleased to meet you! Be so good as to come along with us, for our chief is very ill, and he will be so pleased to see you.'

"I went with them, and they brought me to the hut wherein the good old savage lay suffering much from the effects of poison given him by an enemy. His feet had become swollen to an alarming extent, caused by this wicked man, and it appeared to me that he must infallibly succumb to the malady.

"'You are very ill, my brother,' I said to him.

"'Yes, Black Robe, I am suffering very much pain.'

"'I am sure,' I said, 'that after you leave this world you would desire to be admitted into the palace of the Great Spirit; is that not so?'

"'Oh yes, my Father, I would desire this above all things.'

"'But you know that you could not enter therein unless I washed you on the head' (it is by these words that the missionary explains to the savages the Sacrament of Baptism).

"'O Black Robe!' answered the chief, 'wash me

on my head, for I love the Great Spirit with all my heart !'

" On receiving this beautiful answer I at once began to instruct him on the principle truths of our holy Faith, and from time to time I asked him if he firmly believed in the words I spoke to him.

" ' Oh yes, Black Robe,' he said ; ' most certainly I believe every word you have spoken.'

" These poor savages have such an innate horror of a lie that they cannot imagine it to be possible that anyone for whom they entertain any respect could tell a lie ; and they have an intense veneration for the Black Robes, as they call the missionary Fathers.

" Next morning I returned to visit him, and recalled to his mind the instructions I gave him the previous evening, and I asked him if he still wished that I should wash his head.

" ' Ah, Black Robe !' he said devoutly, ' I beseech you to wash my head as soon as possible, for I am always thinking of the Great Spirit, and I desire so much to be baptized.'

" Yet I did not immediately yield to his request, because I knew that these poor savages always find the greatest difficulty in forgiving others from whom they have received an injury. And as this poor man had received from an enemy what would probably cause his death, I feared that he might not forgive him.

" With this thought in my mind I took my crucifix into my hands, and showed him the image of Jesus dying, and spoke to him of the sufferings which the Great Spirit had endured from the hands of those He loved so much. I told him that His

white children had caused Him to suffer all this, and that before dying He forgave them, and after His death went to His Father in Heaven to pray to Him that He might also forgive them. Then I told him that what the Great Spirit required of His children in this world, of whatever colour they were, or to whatsoever race they belonged, was that they would from their hearts forgive, as He had done, all those who had ever done them any harm, and that unless they did this, He would not receive them into His kingdom.

" ' Well, then,' said the chief, ' since such is the Will of the Great Spirit, I forgive from my heart him who has done me this evil.'

" And in order to prove the sincerity of his words, he assembled around him the principal men of his tribe, and forbade them, on any account whatsoever, to take any vengeance on his greatest enemy.

" I could not restrain my admiration at this heroic deed, and from my inmost heart gave thanks to God for having been pleased to infuse these Christian sentiments into the heart of one who, in his savage life, had never till now known God, yet who loved Him so tenderly.

" How could I for a moment longer defer his Baptism ? As soon as he saw me putting on the sacred vestments, he rose from his humble couch and sat upon it. Then, taking into his hands the holy crucifix, he continued to gaze upon it, or raise his eyes heavenwards, while I performed over him the sacred rite.

" Four days afterwards he departed this life, to receive, let us hope, the crown of the elect in Paradise

from the just Judge Who is not a 'respecter of persons,' and Who, in a special manner, is the Father of those who are humble of heart."

HAUTERIVE: *Catech.* ix., 265.

VI. The Baptism of Desire.

Sometimes it may happen from various reasons that it may be impossible to be baptized with water. In these circumstances, if a person has the desire in his heart of receiving that Sacrament, and is resolved to receive it if ever possible, this desire will be sufficient to secure his salvation if he were to die before he could receive it. It is called the "Baptism of Desire."

THE PHILOSOPHERS OF ALEXANDRIA.

The Emperor Maximinus Daïa, in his desire to make Catherine, a noble and learned lady of Alexandria, apostatize from the Faith, and having failed, sent for the most learned men in his dominions, that in a public assembly, by their arguments they might convince the Saint of the errors of the religion she professed.

Fifteen of these learned men accordingly assembled for this purpose; but the very opposite result was obtained from the one the Emperor expected. Instead of convincing her that her Faith was wrong, she showed them that the religion of the empire and the worship of the gods they adored were false, and besought them to renounce all their errors, and embrace the true Faith, which alone could save their souls.

History tells us that several of them (some authors record that they all) forsook the religion of the pagans, and manifested their desire to profess that which St. Catherine had so clearly proved to them to be the only one revealed by God.

The Emperor became mad with rage at witnessing this failure of his plans, and condemned them all to instant death. They received the sentence with joy; but a sudden fear fell upon them: they had not yet received the grace of Baptism, which they knew to be so essential for obtaining the possession of Heaven. They asked St. Catherine to tell them what would become of them in eternity, seeing that they could not be baptized.

St. Catherine made over them the sign of the Cross, and said to them: "Let not this thought disturb you, since you so earnestly desire to receive that Sacrament; soon also by your martyrdom you will be baptized by your own blood."

Encouraged by those consoling words, they walked joyfully to martyrdom, and, washed from their sins in their own blood, they entered the eternal repose of Paradise.

Laur. Surius, Nov. 25.

VII. The Baptism of Martyrdom.

The third kind of Baptism is that of blood by martyrdom. This takes place when, as in the first centuries of the Church in the days of persecution, many who received the gift of the Faith were put to death before they had the opportunity of being baptized by water.

THE BAPTISM OF ST. GENESIUS.

About the year 304, there dwelt in Rôme a famous comedian whose name was Genesius. He was a great favourite of the Emperor Diocletian. When the Emperor returned to Rome after his victory over the Persians, he was received into the city in triumph.

On this occasion, to please the Emperor, Genesius announced that he would, in his hatred of Christianity, travesty upon the stage some of the ceremonies used by the Christians, particularly those of Baptism.

He appeared, therefore, upon the stage, lying on a bed as if in the agonies of death, and as if desirous of becoming a Christian, asked to be baptized, that he might die happily. On this two other actors appeared, one to represent the priest, and the other to assist him. They went forward to the bed and said to him : " My child, what dost thou ask of us ?"

At that moment God's grace smote the comedian, and he answered, not through mockery now, but from his inmost heart : " I desire to be made a Christian, and to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, that my sins may be taken away."

The Emperor, misunderstanding his serious answer, and thinking that he was only acting his part with great perfection, applauded him. The two actors, continuing their parts, performed the ceremonies of Baptism, and having put on him a white garment, such as is put on those who are newly baptized, led him to the foot of the Emperor's throne, and accused him of being a Christian."

When the Emperor, still thinking that Genesius was only acting his part, asked him what he had to say, he answered : " Hear me, O Emperor, and you, O senators and people of Rome. A little time ago I hated the very name of Christian. I tried to learn their ceremonies and their sacred rites that I might make them the sport of the people by acting them on the stage. But in the middle of this sacrilegious act the grace of God has changed my heart. As I lay on that bed I saw a hand stretched from Heaven towards me, and angels all clad in bright garments standing around me. They read from a book all the sins I had committed from my childhood, then in a moment they blotted them out, and showed me the book : its pages were white as snow.

" You see, O great Emperor, and you, O spectators who are gazing at me, that you have laughed at things most sacred and holy ; but believe as I, who am the greatest sinner of all, now believe, that Jesus Christ is the supreme Lord, and alone worthy of our adoration, and beseech Him to show mercy to you as He has done to me."

When he had ended this speech the Emperor, for the first time, saw that he was no longer acting a part, but that he really believed in God as he declared ; so he ordered him to be beaten with rods, then to be sent to the Prefect Plautius, that he might be compelled to offer sacrifice.

The Prefect made use of every kind of torture his mind could invent to shake the martyr's constancy, but he did not succeed.

" There is no master so great as the one I have seen in the vision. I adore Him and love Him with

my whole heart ; and if I had a thousand lives to sacrifice instead of one, nothing would ever make me renounce His service, for no tortures that could be invented would ever take Jesus Christ from my heart or from my lips. I am exceedingly sorry for all my past sins, and grieve because I have only now begun to serve him."

He spent the short time that remained to him to make reparation for the misdeeds of his past life, and to show to all the sincerity of his conversion. When the Prefect saw that his words were converting many of the pagans, he commanded his head to be cut off, and thus the holy martyr went to Heaven.

ST. JULIAN AND THE PREFECT MARCIAN.

Maximinus Daïa succeeded Diocletian towards the beginning of the fourth century, and persecuted the Christians even more cruelly than his infamous predecessor had done. He renewed the persecution, which had for some time previously somewhat abated, and sent to the city of Antioch one named Marcian, who was as cruel as himself, to persecute the Christians who dwelt there.

His first act was to send forth an order forbidding all Christians to buy or to sell.

It was not long before he learned that St. Julian did not worship the gods of the empire, but, fearing to have him arrested and brought before him on account of the reverence in which he was held by all the people, he sent one of his chief councillors to try to win him over to the worship of the gods without being compelled to bring him publicly before him. Julian, seeing the intentions of the Prefect,

went of his own accord to the tribunal, accompanied by many of those who adhered to the Christian Faith. Here, in the presence of the Prefect, and of the assembled multitude, he strengthened himself for the combat by making the sign of the Cross, and confessing aloud and without hesitation his faith in Jesus Christ.

The Prefect said to him in a tone of anger: "Adore the gods the Emperor adores!"

"Who are your gods of stone or metal, that I should offer incense to them?" replied the Saint. "If they are made of metal, I would prefer my brass utensils, which are at least of some use to man; and if they are made of stone, why should I not, with equal benefit, prostrate myself on the pavement beneath my feet and adore the stones therein, even although sometimes covered with mud?"

Marcian was so angry at these words that he ordered the soldiers to set fire to the house of Julian, and allow none of the Christians who had congregated there to escape from the building. As for Julian himself, who had dared to utter these blasphemies against his gods, he had in store a greater punishment.

The companions of the Saint who dwelt in his house, in which they were accustomed to assemble to sing the Divine Office, offered to Jesus Christ a perfect holocaust of the bodies He had given them. To show how agreeable in His sight was this offering of His servants, God was pleased to work one of His wonderful miracles. For those who passed near the dwelling heard heavenly music rise

from the ruins, and the sick who heard it were freed from their infirmities.

The Prefect again summoned Julian to appear before him, and commanded him to be beaten with rods. While the executioners were torturing him, it happened that one of them was accidentally struck on the eyes, and lost his sight. God made use of this accident to glorify His servant Julian.

"Bring hither all the priests of your gods," he said to Marcian, "and if they are able, by their prayers to the gods they worship, to restore the sight of this injured man, I myself will adore them; but if not, I will call upon the God Whom the Christians adore, and He will hear me."

Marcian agreed to this, and the priests of the false deities were summoned before him. When they came, they cried to their gods; but their divinities of stone and metal heard them not. To them it might have been said what Elias the prophet said of old to the priests of Baal: "Cry louder, for perhaps your gods are asleep!"

Julian then said: "You see, now, what your gods can do!" But Marcian would not own himself vanquished. "Come with me to the temple; it is there that this trial must take place."

When they reached the door of the temple, Julian made the sign of the Cross, and at the same instant all the statues fell to the ground and were reduced to dust. Going then to the wounded soldier, he invoked the holy Name of Jesus, and made over his eyes the sign of the Cross, and his sight was restored to him.

But God bestowed on him a still greater grace—

the gift of the Faith. No sooner did he again see the light of day than, in an accent of joy, he exclaimed: "Jesus Christ is the only True God!" Marcian became so enraged at hearing these words that he ordered his head to be instantly struck off. The newly-made convert, thus baptized in his own blood, went to join in Heaven the legion of the white-robed martyrs who, like him, had died for Christ's sake.

Not long afterwards Julian himself received the palm of martyrdom and went to Paradise to join those who, by his example, had been led to know God, and who had preceded him in their victorious triumph. *Lives of the Saints*, Jan. 9.

VIII. The Promises We make in Baptism.

My child, recall to your mind that never-to-be-forgotten day when you were made God's child by Baptism, and repeat again and again from your heart the promises you then made: "I renounce Satan, with all his works and all his pomps, and I will belong to Jesus Christ now and for ever."

These words were registered in Heaven. God heard them; the angels also heard them, and rejoiced. Satan heard them, too, and was filled with anger; and on the Day of Judgment you will find them written in the book of God's eternal Justice.

A man who is honourable is faithful to his word. Could you, then, be less faithful to these promises you have made to God?

THE ARABS AND THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS.

In the year 1842 forty Christian soldiers, belonging to the French army, were sent to reconnoitre under their captain, also a fervent Catholic.

While pursuing their way through the dense thickets, at some distance from the camp, they were suddenly surrounded by about fifteen hundred Arabs, who were lying in ambush awaiting them. The chief Arab went towards them, declared them to be his prisoners, and condemned them to be put to death. " On one condition only," he said, " will I spare you : renounce Jesus Christ, and you shall all be spared."

They were filled with dismay at these words ; but one brave soldier, mindful of the promises of his Baptism which he had renewed on the day of his first Communion, looked towards his captain, and said : " I for one, captain, will never renounce my Faith."

" Neither will I !" " Neither will I !" they all said, along with their captain. They were instantly put to death, because of their attachment to their Faith and their fidelity to the solemn promises they had made to God ; all except two, who had the misfortune to apostatize, preferring a short temporal life to the eternal life of Heaven. Of these two one died in despair three days afterwards. The other found means of escape, and reached in safety the French camp ; it is to him we owe the account we have just given.

My child, be firm in your Faith. To all the sug-

gestions of the enemy, answer with fortitude: "Sooner die than be unfaithful to the promises of my Baptism." *Souvenirs de la Ire Com.*, p. 26.

GOD'S PROMISES, AND OUR PROMISES.

St. Francis was accustomed to console his brethren in their trials with these words: "We have, it is true, made great promises to God, but the promises God has made to us are infinitely greater. The labours and trials of this life are short, and will soon be past; but in Heaven above, God will give us a recompense for these labours and trials borne patiently, that will never end."

Life of St. Francis Assisi.

THE ANGEL'S REBUKE.

Landelin had from his infancy been brought up in the fear of God, under the care of St. Albert, to whom his father had entrusted him from his earliest years. He had become a model to all the young men who knew him. But it is not to the one that begins well that is promised the crown of life, but to him who perseveres unto the end. Landelin, neglecting to pray to God for help in temptation, forgot the promises of his Baptism, and plunged into the mire of sin and crime. He became the chief of a band of robbers, who devastated the country and brought ruin to many happy homes.

But God was pleased by a great grace to restore His fallen child to His love and friendship.

One evening Landelin, with his accomplices, was preparing to pillage the house of a rich man of the

country, when suddenly there fell dead at his feet one who was acknowledged to be the most wicked man in their company. Everyone seemed struck with terror at this sudden death ; Landelin especially seemed to be overpowered with some terrible thought, and was for a time trembling in every limb. The robbery they were that day to commit was postponed ; a grave was hastily dug, and in it the body of the robber was soon hidden from their sight. They then went to seek repose in their hiding-places, that they might banish from their minds the memory of this terrible event.

But Landelin could find no repose ; the sting of remorse which gnawed his conscience would give him no peace. Still he fought against this grace of God, and would not listen to His call.

At length, overcome by sadness and fatigue, he fell asleep ; but even then terrible visions passed before his eyes, and increased his terror. He imagined that he was buried in the depths of Hell, and suffering the most excruciating torments, and surrounded and pierced through and through with the devouring flames.

Landelin, in the midst of these terrible scenes, awoke, but terror more than ever pierced his soul. He imagined that he had been suddenly called before the tribunal of Jesus Christ to give an account of his sinful life, and that the just Judge had passed upon him the irrevocable sentence of eternal damnation.

Then he fell into despair. Rising from his bed, he rolled upon the ground, crying out as a brute beast void of reason, looking for rest and finding

none. But at that same moment he seemed to see standing before him an angel, who addressed him in these words : " O unfortunate young man, why do you fill the air with these dismal wailings ? Why do you not rather speak to God in prayer, since you have so grievously offended Him Who has been so generous towards you ? Where is now the white robe you received on the day of your Baptism ? What has become of that promise you made to God then, that you would for ever renounce the Devil and all his works ? Why have you refused that throne prepared for you in Heaven by God, through the intercession of St. Albert ? Child of God, indeed you once were, but now you have made yourself the child of Satan. The holy Bishop Albert had obtained of God that the name of Landelin should be written in the book of life, but now Satan has written that name in his book of perdition.

" Know, then, this : that if until now you have escaped death, which would have brought you before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, to receive the awful sentence of the reprobate, it is to the prayers of St. Albert that you owe this grace, as well as the hope of salvation which still remains to you. Now while this respite is granted to you, reflect seriously and consider in your own heart if you would prefer to go down into hell-fire with the demons for ever, or to dwell in the happy mansions of the Blessed. Renounce, then, for ever this life you have adopted, and once more enlist yourself under the banner of Jesus Christ. Be obedient to the holy words which fall from the lips of St. Albert, your father and your

guide, and merit to receive again the white robe of innocence you have lost." Saying these words, the angel disappeared.

Landelin, now seeing in the light of God's grace the depth of misery into which he had fallen, and beholding at the same time the greatness of his crimes and his ingratitude to God, formed the generous resolution of renewing the promises of his Baptism, and of being ever afterwards faithful to them. He at once arose, and, leaving his infamous companions, returned to the peaceful home of his childhood. St. Albert received the lost sheep with the affection of the father of the prodigal son, and Landelin regained by his repentance the innocence he had lost. The rest of his days were spent in austerity and works of penance, and, dying the death of the Saints, his name was enrolled in the catalogue of the servants of God.

Grande vie des Saints, 15 Juin.

Now, as God has made you His child, you should be most careful to serve Him with loving diligence all the days of your life, and be ready to die rather than offend Him. To act otherwise would be to show yourself most ungrateful for His infinite love for you.

ST. POLYCARP BEFORE THE JUDGE.

St. Polycarp was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, and, like him, spent a long life in converting souls to God. When he was an old man, he was seized by order of the Emperor, and accused of being a Christian.

When he was brought before the tribunal, the

judge said to him : " Have pity on thyself, for thou art an old man. Offer sacrifice to the gods, and thou shalt escape the torments and death that await those who refuse to obey. Swear by the fortune of the Emperors, and speak words of blasphemy against Christ."

Polycarp answered : " For eighty-six years have I served my Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and He has never done me any harm ; on the contrary, He has all my lifetime showered down upon me every blessing. And you ask me to blaspheme Him Who is my only joy, in Whom I place all my hopes of happiness and glory hereafter. How could I ever do such a thing to Him Who has always been my most generous benefactor, Whom alone I ought to love, Who also has always protected me and defended me from all harm ?"

The judge condemned him to death ; and when he was about to expire, raising his eyes to Heaven, he cried out : " May Thy Name be for ever blessed, O my God ! May I this day be found worthy to see the fulfilment of Thy promises in Thy own eternal kingdom."

XXXIX

CONFIRMATION

I. Confirmation is a Sacrament.

INSTITUTION ; MATTER AND FORM ; NECESSITY AND EFFECTS.

Confirmation, my child, is a Sacrament by which the Holy Ghost is given to such as are baptized, in order to strengthen them in their faith, and make them perfect Christians. *What is the matter of this Sacrament?* Laying on of hands, with unction of Chrism. *What is its form?* The invocation of the Holy Ghost, and these words : I SIGN THEE WITH THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, I CONFIRM THEE WITH THE CHRISM OF SALVATION ; IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST. *Who is the ordinary minister of it?* A Bishop only. *Is it a sin not to receive this Sacrament when we can?* Yes, a mortal sin, if it be omitted out of contempt or gross neglect.

This sacrament was instituted by our Saviour, Who promised to send the Holy Ghost to His disciples to be their Almighty Comforter under all tribulations (John xiv. 16). His word was fulfilled on Whit-Sunday, when the Holy Ghost descended upon them in Jerusalem ; " which promise was not

only made to the Apostles, but to you, and your children," said St. Peter to the Jews, "and to all that are afar off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 39, 40)—that is, to all the faithful.

This Sacrament follows Baptism, to confirm the work which was there begun. In Baptism we were born children of grace; in Confirmation we receive strength to maintain what we then professed. If, therefore, this Sacrament be not so absolutely necessary to salvation as Baptism, yet, in consideration of human weakness, it is necessary we should receive it, in order to enable us to conquer all the difficulties we meet with in this mortal state; and therefore, when we have the opportunity of receiving it, we cannot omit it without sin.

ST. MAURILLUS AND THE DYING CHILD.

St. Martin, the Apostle of Gaul, had consecrated Maurillus Bishop of Angers, a man revered by all for his holy life.

One day a lady went to him asking him to come at once to confirm her little boy, who was dying, because she did not want him to appear before God without the seal of Confirmation. The Bishop, who was preparing to say Mass, answered that as soon as the Holy Sacrifice was ended he would attend to her request. But when it was ended, and when he had reached the house where the child was, he found that it had just died.

The holy man was filled with grief as he gazed on the body of the boy, not only on account of his death, but principally because it had left this life

without having received the precious grace of Confirmation before entering eternity, and he bitterly reproached himself for not having gone at the moment he had been sent for.

To do penance for this fault—for he considered it a great one, though in itself no blame for neglect could have been attributed to him—he took the resolution to leave Angers and live in some unknown place, to weep before God for this offence.

The people of the town and diocese of Angers, having discovered his flight, caused a diligent search to be made for him throughout the country, and having at length discovered him, would not leave him until he consented to return with them.

He had scarcely reached the town, his mind still troubled at the result of his negligence, when, urged by the Spirit of God, he went to the place where the remains of the boy were interred, and when he reached it, he fell prostrate on the ground and, shedding abundant tears, poured forth the most fervent prayers that God might not deprive the child of the graces specially given to those who have received the Holy Ghost, since it was by no fault of the boy, but only by his own, that he was deprived of them.

And as he continued for a long time to pray in this manner, God was pleased to work a miracle in his favour. The dead child suddenly came forth from the grave, and, kneeling at his feet, waited there in silence, as if he expected to receive some favour. Maurillus, whose heart now overflowed with happiness, went with all haste for the Sacred Chrism, and, returning to the grave, instantly

confirmed him, imposing on him the name of Remigius.

Instead of returning again to the grave, the boy, raising up his eyes towards those of the Bishop, thanked him for the blessing he had bestowed on him. At the same time he told him that it was the will of God that he should still live for many more years in this world.

His mother, full of joy and gratitude, took him home with her, and under her care he grew up in piety, leading so perfect a life that, when he was of age, he was ordained priest, and finally, when St. Maurillus was called to receive his reward, he was chosen to succeed him in the See of Angers.

Fortunat. Vita S. Maurilli, c. xiii.

JULIAN THE APOSTATE AND THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

The Emperor Julian the Apostate, wishing to show publicly that he had renounced his Faith and embraced paganism, gave orders that a solemn sacrifice should be offered up to the heathen gods in a certain temple which he indicated.

He himself went to the temple, arrayed in royal magnificence, in the midst of great pomp, to assist at the ceremony.

While the sacrifice was being offered up, suddenly the sacrificial knives were seen to fall from the hands of the priests, and the fire on the altar to be instantly extinguished ; everyone present felt as if something supernatural had taken place.

The head priest of the idols soon divined the cause of this interruption, and cried out : " Is there here present a Christian who has recently been

baptized with water, and anointed with oil and chrism ?"

Then a young man, who had just been baptized and confirmed, rising up, said : " O priest, I am that one, that Christian, and all that I had to do to overturn your idols and bring this disgrace upon you was to make the sign of the Cross and to pronounce the Name of Jesus."

The Emperor, who had been at one time a Christian, and knew well the great mysteries of faith, was seized with dismay, and, fearing that the vengeance of God was then about to fall upon him, departed from the temple in confusion without uttering a single world.

The courageous soldier of Jesus Christ went immediately and related to the faithful what had taken place, and they received with consolation this new proof of the divine virtue infused into the soul by the presence of the Holy Spirit of God.

FLEURY : *Hist. Eccl.*, I. XV.

II. WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE SOULS OF CHILDREN.

My child, since the Holy Ghost on the day of your Baptism chose your soul to be His dwelling-place, and since it is His greatest delight to abide in it, you should show your gratitude to Him by leading a holy life, not only afterwards, when you grow up, but even from your very infancy. You must love him and listen to His inspirations in your childhood if you hope to love Him and to be found faithful to Him when you grow older.

To accomplish this our Divine Lord, Who knows how weak and frail we are if left to ourselves, instituted the Sacrament of Confirmation, in which by the more abundant graces of the Holy Ghost given to us in that Sacrament, we may be able to fulfil more perfectly all our duties, and overcome more easily the enemies of our souls.

ST. OZANNA'S PRAYER.

From her very infancy St. Ozanna seemed to have no other desire than to love God. When she was only six years old she asked the Holy Ghost, in her own simple way, to come and tell her what He wanted her to do, and at the same time to give her all the graces she needed to fulfil His blessed will.

God, Who loves the simple and innocent of heart, was pleased to answer her prayer in a wonderful manner, for there came a voice from Heaven, which distinctly said to her: "Ozanna, my child, to lead a good life you have only to love Me with your whole heart."

THE CHILDHOOD OF ST. ELIZABETH.

From her earliest years all the thoughts and feelings of St. Elizabeth of Hungary seemed to be centred in the desire of serving God and meriting Heaven. Whenever an opportunity offered, she went to the castle chapel, and there, lying at the foot of the altar, she would open before her a large prayer-book, though as yet she knew not how to read; then, folding her little hands, and raising her eyes reverently to Heaven, she gave herself up with wonderful recollection to meditation and prayer.

At play with her companions, for instance, in hopping along she led the way, so that all were obliged to follow her to the chapel; and when she found it shut, she would fervently kiss the lock, the door and the walls, out of love for Jesus, Who resided in the tabernacle within it.

She continually sought occasions of union with God; and when any obstacle prevented her from saying as many prayers, or making as many genuflections as she would wish, she would say to her companions: "Let us lie down upon the ground to measure which of us is the tallest."

Then, stretching herself by the side of each little girl, she would profit of the moment to humble herself before God, and say a "Hail Mary." When afterwards a wife and mother, she used to take pleasure in relating these innocent wiles of her childhood.

She often conducted her little companions to the cemetery, and would say to them: "Remember that one day we shall be nothing but dust. The people who lie buried here were once living, as we are now; they are now dead, as we shall one day be. For this reason we must love God. Kneel down and say with me: 'O Lord, by Your cruel death, and by Your dear Mother Mary, deliver the souls of those who are lying here from their sufferings. O Lord, by Your five sacred wounds, grant that we may be saved.'"

Such was the life of St. Elizabeth in her childhood. Her companions willingly joined her in her prayers, and listened to her simple words; and they would relate to their parenst how that the Infant Jesus

often came to her, and, saluting her tenderly, would play with her. But she strictly forbade them to tell these things to anyone.

MONTALEMBERT: *Vie de S. Elizabeth.*

THE VENERABLE BERNARDINE MARY.

When the Venerable Bernardine Mary was only three years old she already spoke of God with great reverence and love. Her countenance, naturally pale, became radiant, and her eyes sparkled with a celestial brilliancy whenever she spoke of God or the things of Heaven.

She was often heard to say: "God is near me, God sees me, God hears me." This thought made her serious beyond her age, and people used to say that she always seemed to be as if at prayer in the church. If they asked her why she was always so thoughtful and solemn, she would answer: "Because I feel that I am always in the presence of my Heavenly Father."

When anyone in her presence pronounced the Name of Jesus, she was instantly overcome with a feeling of loving emotion, and whenever she heard read the history of Our Saviour's Passion, she would burst into tears, and renew her oft-repeated promise that she would never offend God.

III. CONFIRMATION MAKES US STRONG AND PERFECT CHRISTIANS.

By the Sacrament of Baptism, my child, we are made Christians—that is, we receive in it the gift of the Faith; our souls then become the temples of

the Holy Ghost. By the Sacrament of Confirmation we are strengthened in our Faith, and are made strong and perfect Christians, and soldiers of Jesus Christ, and are thus enabled to profess that faith before the world as often as God's honour, our own, or our neighbour's good, requires it.

GOD OR MAMMON? HE CHOSE TO SERVE GOD.

Saturus held the high office of major-domo in the palace of Hunericus, King of the Vandals. He and his family were Christians, but practised their religion in secret, because of the hatred of the King for all who were not Arians.

When it was told the King that Saturus was a Catholic, he was filled with great fury at the thought that one who held so high a position in his house and kingdom should profess the Catholic faith. So, calling him into his presence, he threatened, not only to deprive him of his position and wealth, but even to reduce his wife and children to the state of slavery, if he would not renounce the Catholic faith and become an Arian.

Saturus bravely replied that he must obey God rather than man, and that nothing the King could do to him would ever make him unfaithful to his duty to God.

His wife, hearing of this noble resolution, was filled with dismay; for although she too was a Catholic, she was like many in the world, and thought more of the present life than of that which is to come. Going to her husband, she threw herself on her knees at his feet, and begged of him by all that he held dear not to bring ruin on himself and her and

on their children. " I beseech you," she said, " not to cast at your feet the noble position in which you are placed. What will become of us if you thus throw away the wealth we now possess ? And think, too, of the awful degradation of being made slaves, and of our children being deprived of an alliance with the noble families to which they aspire. Oh ! God cannot want of us so great a sacrifice ! He cannot be so cruel ! He cannot be angry with you for doing through force and necessity what so many have done of their own free will and without remorse."

But the faithful servant of Christ answered her in the words of Job to his wife : " You speak like one of the foolish women. I would have cause to fear, O woman, if, for the sake of the comforts of this life I would lose the happiness of Heaven. If you really loved me, your husband, as you say you do, you would never have dared to bring about my eternal ruin by such words as you have spoken, and by these treacherous caresses you have lavished on me. Let the King take away from me my wife," he continued, as if speaking to himself, " and my children, and my possessions ; I resign myself to God's holy will, remembering the words of Jesus Christ, Who said : ' If a man forsake not his wife and his children, and his fields and his house, he cannot be My disciple.' "

His wife went away shedding tears. Saturus was deposed from his office, deprived of all his wealth, and after undergoing many bodily sufferings from the hands of the cruel King, was cast out into the world to beg his bread.

ST. FIDELIS, MARTYR.

In the town of Sigmaringen, which is situated in one of the provinces of Switzerland, St. Fidelis was born in the year of our Lord 1577.

At the time of his birth it was thought that either the mother or the child would certainly die. When the mother heard this, she fervently prayed to God in these words: "O my God, if it is necessary that one of us must die, take me to Thyself, and spare my child, that it may be born again to Thee by Baptism, and may thus one day inherit the Kingdom of Heaven."

As a reward for this generous self-sacrifice the child was safely brought into the world, and the mother recovered.

But this was not the only favour she received from God for her child, for the Holy Ghost bestowed on him the gift of wisdom in a high degree, and made him one of the most learned men of his time, and also the gift of understanding, which showed him how to become a great Saint.

At his Baptism he received the name of Mark.

When he grew up, he chose the profession of a lawyer, in which he gained for himself much distinction; he was accounted to be the most just, the most successful, and the most learned lawyer in the whole country.

The poor loved him because he pleaded their cause with so much earnestness, and the wealthy esteemed him because he sought in his pleadings only the prosperous issue of whatever was entrusted to him, instead of wishing to heap up riches for himself at their expense.

This made the other members of the profession entertain feelings of animosity towards him. "Why do you always try to finish so soon the causes you take in hand?" they used to say to him. "You will never make a fortune in that way; besides, in acting thus, you do injury to us, as well as to yourself."

Mark answered: "To act in the manner you suggest, by prolonging causes without reason, is to be guilty of injustice. How can you conscientiously charge against others even the errors which your carelessless may have caused, much less retain for yourselves what you may have acquired by unnecessary delays? No, I will never sully my conscience by such sinful conduct."

These words, spoken with such firmness, only served to increase their animosity; they persecuted him without ceasing, and did everything their jealousy could suggest to injure him.

"O wicked world!" he exclaimed, when he perceived their malice; "what a dangerous thing it is for an upright man to live in the midst of such iniquity! How impious are your maxims! How difficult it is to be at the same time a rich advocate and a good Christian!" From that moment he formed the resolution of forsaking it altogether to consecrate himself to God in religion.

The Order he chose was that of the Capuchins on account of its poverty and severity. On entering it, he adopted the name of Fidelis. When those who had known him in the world had learned of the step he had taken, and that the eloquent lawyer had put on the dress of the poorest Order in the

Church, they were filled with amazement, and thought that he had suddenly become demented.

"Ah, my friends," he replied to them, "what more glorious exchange could I have made? I have sacrificed for God's sake the perishable things of this world, and in return He has promised me the eternal joys of Heaven. Judge for yourself whether or not I have made a bad bargain!"

St. Fidelis, after a holy life, shed his blood in testimony of his love of God, and now reigns among the white-robed army of the martyrs in Paradise.

Lives of the Saints, April 24.

THE CHILDREN'S MARTYRDOM.

Maximian hated the very name of Christian, and determined to put to death every one who professed the religion of Jesus Christ. Many martyrs sealed their faith with their blood in the terrible persecution he raised up against the Church. He did not spare even little children, but put them also to death without mercy. The historians of those terrible times have recorded the following story:

There were two brothers belonging to a noble Christian family whom the Emperor resolved to deprive of their Faith. They were only little children when he caused them to be brought to his palace.

At first he gave them sweatmeats and other things which delight the hearts of children, and they received them with the greatest pleasure. As they were beginning to grow up he gave them some food to eat which they had seen him offer to idols, but they both at once immediately refused to touch it.

" Our parents told us," they said, " that we must never eat anything that has been offered to idols."

At this unexpected resistance to his wishes on the part of mere infants the Emperor became exceedingly angry, and ordered them to be cruelly beaten ; yet they would not yield.

He next ordered a great fire to be kindled and a caldron full of water to be placed upon it. When the water began to boil, he commanded the children to be stripped of their clothing and thrown into it.

As soon as this was done the younger boy died. His brother, seeing that he was dead, cried out : " O my brother, thou hast conquered !" Then, throwing his arms around him, he also fell down and expired.

Thus was the cruel Emperor vanquished by little children in whom the Holy Ghost dwelt, and by whose mouth He spoke, according to those words of the Sacred Scriptures : " Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."

The Christians of Nicomedia secretly buried their bodies, and every year on the anniversary of their triumph they celebrated a joyous festival under the name of " The Children's Martyrdom."

IV. Confirmation Strengthens us against the Enemies of our Souls.

My child, the Devil is the first great enemy of our souls ; he hates us, and is continually seeking to destroy us. St. Peter says : " My brethren, be sober and watch, for your adversary the Devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may

devour, whom resist ye strong in faith." Let us see how he tempted some of the Saints, and how they overcame him.

ST. IGNATIUS' TEMPTATIONS.

When Satan saw the great fervour of St. Ignatius of Loyola he began to tempt him, that he might make him fall into sin.

The first temptation was one of pride. He put into his heart the thought that he was already a great Saint, and that God must be pleased because he was so holy, and because he had performed so many penances, and had said so many prayers, and had done so many works of charity.

St. Ignatius knew that such thoughts could not come from God. He remembered also that he had been at one time a great sinner, and that all his good works were but little when compared with his former sins. By this thought he put away the temptation.

When Satan saw himself thus defeated, he tried another kind of temptation, by which he hoped to turn him away from his holy life. "How can you imagine that you shall be able to continue this kind of life to the end?" he whispered in his heart. "You are young, and have at least fifty years to live. How could you live so austere a life for so long a time?"

The Saint saw that this also was a temptation; so he raised up his mind to Heaven, and asked God for help to overcome it, and God heard his prayer. "Begone, Satan!" he said. "How can you promise me fifty years more of life, since it is not in your

power to give me even one day ? And even although it were certain that I was to live all those years, what are they when compared to eternity ? God, Who supports me to-day by His grace, will also support me to-morrow, and every day till the end of my life."

It was in this way, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Saint overcame these temptations of the Devil, and persevered in his holy life.

THE YOUNG SPANISH GENTLEMAN.

A young Spanish gentleman had spent his youth in doing evil, daily adding sin to sin. But God, in His mercy, gave him a special grace which showed him the end to which he was going. He took the resolution of beginning at once a holy life and of repairing the past by works of mortification and penance.

He kept his resolution, and in a short time became as remarkable for his piety as he had formerly been for his evil deeds.

But Satan was filled with rage, because a soul which he had considered to be his own for ever had been snatched from him. He put before him temptations more terrible than ever ; but the young man immediately raised his mind to Heaven to ask for grace and help, and he always overcame them.

Satan, seeing that he could not succeed in this manner, next tried to throw him into despair, by bringing before his mind the sins of his youth, and by showing him their enormity, and the little penance he had done for them.

One day he appeared to him under the form of a

terrible spectre, dragging after him heavy chains, and pretending that he had come for the purpose of taking him to Hell, to punish him for all the crimes of his life.

The young man, without the least sign of fear, said to him : " Satan, you do not make me afraid. I do not fear you, because God is stronger than you are, and Jesus Christ has merited for me the grace of pardon. I am not afraid of God, for I love Him, and He sent His Son Jesus from Heaven not to destroy my soul, but to save it. As for yourself, O wicked one, I tell you again that I do not fear you, and what is more, I hate you ; you shall never make me offend God, or even doubt of His goodness."

The Devil, hearing these words, fled in confusion and left the young man in peace.

The Devil sometimes changes himself into an angel of light to deceive us—that is to say, he often tries to gain our souls by praising our good works, and exciting thoughts of pride and self-conceit in our hearts.

" BEGONE, SATAN !"

St. Vincent Ferrer often spent the whole night in prayer. One night the tempter appeared to him in the form of an ancient Father of the Desert, and thus spoke to him : " Brother Vincent, I am come from Heaven to visit you, that I may give you some advice that will be useful to you in the path to Heaven. I am one of the Fathers of the Desert who long ago lived so piously in the solitudes of Egypt.

" In my youth I lived a very careless life, and even committed great sins. But when I became

an old man, I began to be afraid of death and judgment, and I went into the desert, where by God's grace I lived in penance for a few years, and obtained God's pardon, and I am now in Heaven.

" Now, I advise you to do as I did. You are yet a young man ; go, then, and enjoy the pleasures of the world, and when you see the day of your death drawing near, it will be time enough to begin a life of penance. God is so good, He will very readily pardon you ; and when you die He will take you to Heaven, to enjoy its pure delights in the company of the angels, and of so many others who were once sinners, as I was, and are now glorious Saints."

St. Vincent immediately cried out : " Begone, Satan ! I have consecrated to God my youth as well as my old age, because I wish to give Him my whole life."

Satan, seeing himself discovered and conquered, fled in confusion, and by the grace of the Holy Ghost St. Vincent persevered to the end.

The next great enemy of our souls is the world. My child, you must not love the world, nor the things of this world, because you are only an exile and a stranger here, and your true home is Heaven.

What is meant by the world ? By " the world " is meant the false maxims of the world, and the society of those who love the vanities and pleasures of this world better than God.

WHY THE GOOD GOD IS SO MUCH OFFENDED.

Luanus was a little boy who kept his father's flocks on the mountain-side. He was a pious child, but had no learning.

Now it happened that the great Saint Comgall was passing near the place where Luanus was, and, being attracted by his appearance, stopped to speak to him.

When he saw that he had no learning, and that he was at the same time very eager to learn, he got a slate and wrote on it the alphabet. The boy soon mastered his first lesson ; and the Saint, seeing that he was clever as well as good, took him to the city of Benchor, and placed him in a school which was taught by the monks.

Here Luanus became so fond of learning that night and day he prayed to God that he might one day become a great scholar.

The Abbot was at first afraid that this great craving after learning might stain the purity of his soul. But God was watching over him ; and while He granted him the gift of learning He also gave him one of still greater value, the gift of humility.

One day the Abbot saw the boy seated at the feet of an angel, who was teaching him to read and encouraging him to study. Calling Luanus to his side, he said to him : " My child, thou hast asked a dangerous gift from God. Many have lost their souls in eternity because they had an undue love of knowledge."

" My Father," answered the child with the utmost humility, " if I learn to know God, I shall love Him better and never offend Him, for those only offend Him who do not know and love Him."

" Go, my son," said the Abbot, who was charmed with this beautiful answer—" go and remain firm in

the Faith, and the true science will conduct you through this world till it brings you to Heaven, where you shall know God as He is, and be able to love Him for ever and ever."

O my child, this should be your great aim in all things, not to seek the praise of the world, but, as St. Luanus did, to live in it for God alone, and to love Him alone.

Yet, my child, there are many Christians who live for this world only, and who regulate their conduct by what the world will say about them ; but when they come to die they find out how they have been deceived.

TO-MORROW NEVER CAME.

There was once a father of a family who lived in the neglect of his religious duties. He led a blameless life in the eyes of the world because he was honest and kind, and was most attentive to his business. People called him an excellent man.

He had a daughter who was well instructed in her religion, and she knew that, though the world had so high an esteem for her father, he was at enmity with God ; and because she loved him, the sad state of his soul made her very uneasy.

One evening, when they were sitting alone, she gently said to him : " Father, would you not be much happier if you went to the Sacraments and lived a holy life ?"

" Oh ! I am quite happy as I am," he answered ; " my conscience does not trouble me. Am I not honest, and beloved by everyone around me ? What more could I desire ?"

"Ah, yes, my father, that is true; but of what avail will the esteem of the world be to you when you come to the hour of your death if you have not pleased God?"

"God is good," replied her father, "and He will have mercy on me, and take me to Heaven. Oh no, God would never send me to Hell. He is too good to do that. Besides, I intend to serve God better when I have more time; but, at present, I have no time to think about these things."

The poor girl's words had no effect on him. He continued, as before, to seek the esteem of the world and the good favour of men, and to neglect his religious duties.

But the hour of death came to him. It came when he was least expecting it; it came one day when he was busy with his worldly affairs, and it came suddenly. He died without the priest and without the Sacraments, because, when in health, he had put off till to-morrow—a to-morrow that never came—and had lived for the world, and not for God.

But that is not the way in which the Saints lived. They lived for God alone.

ST. BERNARD'S GOLDEN RULE.

To keep himself from being influenced by what the world would say of him, St. Bernard was accustomed to say to himself very often every day: "Bernard, if you were to die to-day, would you do what you are now going to do, and in what manner would you do it?"

He thought only of how God would judge his actions, and not of what the world might say about them.

THE HERMIT'S ADVICE.

A young man who wanted to save his soul went to a pious hermit and said to him: "My Father, tell me what I must do to reach Heaven, for I am living in the midst of a wicked world that is constantly tempting me."

The hermit answered: "My child, every morning when you arise say to yourself: 'Perhaps this day may be the last of my life'; and, when evening comes, say: 'Perhaps I may die before the morning.' This will make you despise the world and the vain opinions of men, and your life will be spent for God."

V. CONFIRMATION ENABLES US TO SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR JUSTICE' SAKE.

My child, Jesus Christ has said: "Every one that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father Who is in Heaven. But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in Heaven." (St. Matt. x. 32, 33).

It is by virtue of the Sacrament of Confirmation that we are able to profess our faith before tyrants and persecutors. Let me put before you a few examples of how the holy martyrs, by the strength infused into them by the Holy Ghost, confessed their faith before men, and how they died for Christ's sake.

HEROIC FAITH OF A CHILD.

In the year 1833 a violent persecution was raised against the Church by the King of Cochin China, and many of the Christians were cruelly tortured and put to death for the Faith.

These good people showed the greatest joy in the midst of their sufferings, and even the little children nobly confessed the Faith, and offered themselves to the judge to receive the crown of martyrdom.

One day a little boy presented himself before the tribunal of the judge. He threw himself on his knees before him and asked permission to speak.

When he obtained permission, he said: "Mandarin, cut off my head with the sword, that I may go to my own country."

"Where is your country?" asked the judge.

"It is Heaven," replied the child.

"And where are your parents?"

"They are gone home to Heaven, and I want to follow them. Oh, sir, give me a stroke with the sword and send me there too."

The Mandarin was struck with admiration at the faith and courage of the boy, but refused to grant him his request. But this child received from God the glory of the martyrs on account of his great desire of being a martyr.

We may not be able to shed our blood for the Faith; but if we live for Heaven and for God as the martyrs did, God will give us Heaven as our reward in His own good time.

Annals of Prop. of the Faith.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. CLEMENT, POPE.

In the year 100, on the 23rd day of November, St. Clement was martyred. During the nine years he sat on the throne of St. Peter many of the pagans renounced the worship of their false gods and embraced the true Faith, on account of seeing his holy life and his good example.

A great persecution against the flock of Jesus Christ arose about the end of the first century. When the chiefs of the pagan nation saw the zeal of St. Clement, and how that multitudes were daily forsaking the religion of the Empire to become Christians, they were enraged against him, and resolved to make him their first victim.

They therefore seized him and brought him before the Governor of the city, and accused him of sacrilege, because he spoke against the worship of the gods, refused to obey the commands of the Emperor, and taught the people also to be disobedient.

But many of the people, who knew that the things alleged against him were false, openly declared that they knew him to be a holy man, kind to the poor and the infirm, and anxious to do good to all. Mamertine, the judge, did not dare, in the face of so much evidence, to condemn him, since even his bitterest enemies could not find any crime against him ; so he sent to the Emperor Trajan to ask him what he should do.

Trajan at once sent an answer to the Prefect, saying : " Clement must offer sacrifice to the gods ; if he refuses to do that, he must be banished to one of the barren islands in the Euxine Sea."

When Mamertine received these orders from the Emperor, he ordered Clement to be again brought before him, and requested him in the gentlest manner to do what the Emperor commanded, for he did not wish to send into banishment one who was innocent and so much beloved.

But Clement answered that neither exile nor death itself would ever make him disobey God, Whom he loved above all things, and Whose servant he was. He also tried to persuade Mamertine to renounce the worship of idols and serve the one true God ; and if he did not succeed in this, he at least made him more kind and lenient towards the Christians.

Seeing that Clement would not obey the commands of Trajan, Mamertine saw himself obliged to pronounce the sentence of banishment against him. But to show how unwillingly he did this, he ordered a well-equipped vessel to be prepared, with every convenience for so long a voyage, and as he took leave of him, tears of unfeigned sorrow fell from his eyes, as he said : " I hope that the God Whom you adore will not forsake you in your banishment, but will fill you with consolation in the exile to which you are going for His sake."

Many Christians accompanied him into banishment, for they preferred to leave their country, their home, and their friends, rather than be separated from one they loved so much.

On arriving at the island to which he was sent, he found there about two thousand Christians, who had likewise been banished for the Faith to that

same place, and who were condemned to work in the mines and quarries.

As soon as Clement saw them, his paternal heart was filled with joy. " My children," he said " God has sent me here to live amongst you, not on account of my merits, but to give me a share in your sufferings, and to encourage you to remain firm in the Faith."

One of the greatest hardships these exiled Christians had to endure was thirst. There was no water near them ; they had to go six miles to the nearest spring, and had to carry home on their shoulders what they required, besides the labour which was exacted of them by their taskmasters.

St. Clement was filled with compassion for them when he saw this, and prayed to God to come to their assistance.

When his prayer was ended, he saw on a neighbouring mountain a lamb standing, which seemed to mark with its feet something on dry ground. On going to the place and digging there, a fountain of water sprang up, sufficient for the wants of the whole multitude.

When the report of this miracle had spread abroad, all the people went to see St. Clement. The Saint went out to meet them, and preached to them the doctrine of Jesus Christ with so much power and zeal that many of them on the spot renounced idolatry and were baptized. The temples of the idols were destroyed, the idols themselves broken to pieces, and many churches were built in honour of the true God.

When Trajan heard of what had taken place, his

rage knew no bounds. He despatched in great haste a Prefect, named Ausidianus, to punish the Saint and those who had become Christians. On his arrival, the Prefect immediately began his work of impiety, and many of the faithful were daily put to death because they would not deny their Faith. He had not to go and look for them, because they of their own accord came forward and declared themselves Christians, that they might be slain, and so obtain sooner the crown of life.

At length the Prefect became weary of this work of carnage, and resolved to put an end to it by the death of St. Clement. He had at first been afraid to touch him because he feared the anger of the people, but, emboldened by the readiness with which they all met death, he at length commanded the holy Pontiff to be brought before him.

He began by asking him to worship the gods of the Empire; but St. Clement answered that he would never renounce the worship of the God he loved so much to adore idols made by the hands of men, and that there was nothing he desired more than to follow his beloved children to martyrdom, that he might reign eternally with them in Heaven.

The Prefect then commanded that he should be cast into the sea with an anchor tied to his neck, so that the Christians might not be able to recover his body to give it the honour of a martyr's burial.

The affliction of the faithful on hearing that their beloved father and master was to be taken from them was great beyond all expression. When they saw the soldiers leading him towards the ship that was to take him away from the land, they all ran

towards the shore praying and crying out: "O Lord, save him!" But the holy martyr cried out: "O Lord Jesus, receive my soul!"

These were the last words they heard him utter as he was borne from them. They followed the boat with their eyes till it had gone about four miles out to sea. There the holy Pontiff was cast forth into the ocean, as the Prefect had commanded.

Not long after his death Cornelius and Phœbus, two of his disciples, requested their fellow-Christians to pray to God that the body of their faithful master might be restored to them. And behold! as they prayed, the sea went back and there appeared a pathway of dry land, which led them to the spot where the body of the martyr lay. They went thither in solemn procession, and found there a little chapel of marble, built by the hands of the angels, in which lay the sacred remains; and at his side was the anchor which had been tied around his neck. But when they were about to remove the body, God revealed to them that this was the place he had chosen for the repose of His servant, and that they were to leave him to rest there; and that every year on the anniversary of his death He would, by His almighty power, cause the sea to open, and leave a passage on the dry land, that the faithful might be able to go to his tomb to pray.

This miracle continued for many years, and in a short time there was not to be found in the whole country a Jew, a pagan, or a heretic, for, by the grace of God and the prayers of His servant Clement, they had all become faithful and devout children of the Church.

Petits Bolland., Nov. 23.

ST. VALERIA OF LIMOGES.

Two years after St. Peter went to Rome, he sent St. Martiel into France to preach the Gospel. St. Martiel was one of the seventy-two disciples who were chosen by Our Lord Himself to help the Apostles in the conversion of the world.

When the Saint and his companions reached the city of Limoges, which was to be the centre of their labours, they began at once the work for which they had been sent.

Now, it happened that not far from the place where they lodged there was a palace, which belonged to a rich and powerful family, and which was occupied by a lady called Susanna and her daughter Valeria. They were not Christians, but had led a blameless life in the midst of the pagans among whom they dwelt.

In the palace there was a poor man who was insane. No one dared to approach him. He was bound with chains, and confined in one of the strong-rooms of the palace, and his screams were sometimes so terrible as to strike with terror everyone who heard them.

When St. Martiel learned what was the cause of this noise, he went to the palace, for he hoped by his prayers to obtain the cure of the insane man. Susanna had already heard of the Saint, and of the wonders he had wrought in the city since his arrival, and was glad when she was told he desired to speak to her. "Perhaps he may also," she said, "cure this poor man."

St. Martiel knew the thoughts that were in her

mind; so he said: "If you will only believe, you shall see the glory of God." Then, moved with compassion for the unfortunate man, he made the sign of the Cross over him, and immediately the chains that bound him were broken, and he stood up before them cured.

Susanna and her daughter, being filled with astonishment at this miracle, asked the Saint many questions about the God he worshipped, Who was so powerful, and of the doctrines he taught.

St. Martiel then preached to them these doctrines, and instructed them in the truths of the Christian religion. The grace of God at the same time spoke to their hearts, which were already prepared to receive the Faith, and they fell at the feet of the holy man to ask Baptism. After praying with them for some time, he baptized them along with six hundred of their household, who also asked to be made Christians. Not long afterwards Susanna passed to a better life, but Valeria lived for many years to help the infant Church in Gaul, and to edify the Christians by her holy example.

The house of Valeria now became the principal abode of St. Martiel. Thither people came from every province of ancient Gaul to receive instruction in the Christian faith, or to be cured of their temporal maladies. Valeria attended to their wants, and especially to those of the poor. In order that she might be more free to serve God, she made a vow of virginity. She also distributed her riches among the poor, so that in every part of the country people spoke of her goodness and of the holy works she did for God.

It was about this time that Julianus was appointed governor of the southern countries of Gaul. He had been promised the hand of Valeria before her conversion, and now, when he heard that she had become a Christian, and that she had made a vow of virginity, and was distributing among the poor the riches he had hoped to obtain along with her, he was filled with indignation.

As soon as he arrived at Limoges he sent for her to appear before him. Valeria went at once to his house, and falling down on her knees at his feet, waited patiently till he would speak to her.

"Is it true," he said, "that you have given to another that heart you promised to give to me?"

Valeria answered: "I would indeed be the most vile creature on the face of the earth if I gave to any other man that love which belonged to you; but, by a special inspiration from Heaven, I have chosen to lay aside all affection for an earthly spouse, that I may belong solely to my God for ever. In doing this I have shown how much I esteem you, for if I have given my heart to another instead of you, it is only to Jesus Christ my Saviour. No one else would ever take your place in my heart. It is to the Blessed Martiel that I owe this happiness. Like me, be you also obedient to his voice, and learn to know the one true God. Become a Christian, and we shall for ever love each other as pure virgins in His sight."

Julianus became very angry at these words. He would not allow her to say any more, but condemned her to death, and ordered Hortarius, his steward, to see that the sentence was carried out.

When Valeria heard this sentence she was filled with intense joy, and went to the place of death as it she had been going to a splendid feast.

As she was proceeding along the road, she said to Hortarius: "You think you are leading me to my death just now, but you are mistaken. I am going to begin a new and never-ending life. As for yourself, you shall die this very night, and then whose shall those riches be which you possess?"

When she reached the place where she was to die, she lifted up her hands to Heaven, and said: "My Saviour Jesus, my Lord and my Master, Thou hast been pleased to call me to know Thee through Thy blessed servant Martiel. To show Thee my gratitude for this immense favour, I have rejected all worldly alliances, and by a vow did consecrate myself for ever to Thee. It is therefore for Thee, and because I will not renounce my Faith in Thee and my love for Thee, that I am now about to die. Send me, then, Thy holy angels from Heaven to protect me, and defend me from the snares of the Devil, so that I may be eternally happy with Thee in Heaven."

As she finished her prayer there came a voice from Heaven saying: "Valeria, fear not, for the angels are gazing on you with delight, and are waiting to receive you into the eternal joys of Paradise."

At these words the countenance of Valeria became bright like the sun, and lifting up her eyes to Heaven, she cried out: "My God, my Father, I commend my soul to Thy hands."

The executioner then raised his sword, and with one blow cut off her head. Then all the people, both pagans and Christians, who were present, saw her

soul leave her body in the appearance of a bright globe of fire, which the angels received and carried into Heaven in the midst of beautiful music, such as no earthly ear had ever before heard.

But another wonder took place at the same time, for when the executioner was looking on his work of death, he and all the people were surprised to behold the holy maiden rise up from the ground, and taking up her head which had just been cut off, carry it to the church where the blessed Martiel was saying Mass, and lay it at his feet. Her relics were preserved with great care by the faithful people of Limoges, and afterwards her shrine became a place of pilgrimage, where people came to pray; and many were the graces and favours, both spiritual and temporal, that she obtained for her clients.

XL

THE HOLY EUCHARIST: THE REAL PRESENCE

I. On the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

My child, Jesus Christ loves us with an infinite love. When He saw that we were for ever to be shut out of Heaven on account of the sin of our first parents, He came down from Heaven and died for us upon the Cross. Surely there could not be a greater act of love than that.

THE GREATEST ACT OF LOVE.

But Jesus, Who is infinite, did something greater still to show us how much He loved us. His delight is to be with us, His children; and that He might be always with us, and with each one of us in particular, He instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. In the Holy Eucharist Jesus is present amongst us, just as truly as He was with the Jews when He was visibly present on earth, and in it He comes even into our very souls to dwell there, that He may be with us, and that we may be with Him. Oh, this is indeed the greatest of all God's wonderful

works! Who can ever doubt of the love of Jesus for us, since He has done this to prove to us how great it is?

The Catechism tells us that the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine.

THE HOLY NUN'S DESIRE.

One day a holy nun, who lived in the convent with St. Teresa, and who tenderly loved Our Blessed Lord, said to the Saint: "O my mother, I wish I had lived at the time when Jesus Christ was on earth; what a joy it would have been to have seen His face, to have heard Him speak, to have been near Him, to have gone about with Him, and perhaps to have had the happiness of speaking to Him! Oh, I am sure I would then have been a Saint!"

St. Teresa smiled. "My dear sister," she answered, "have you forgotten that Jesus is still on earth, and that He lives near you—yes, in the house with you, and often in your very soul, and that you see Him, and can speak to Him as often as you like? Is not Jesus with us in the Most Holy Sacrament? Why, then, do you wish to have lived long ago, since that same Jesus who lived with Martha and Mary lives also with you?"

These words revived the faith of the good nun; she no longer regretted that she had not lived during the time of Our Lord's mortal life, since Jesus was always so near her.

" HE IS THERE."

A little English boy heard that Jesus was present in the holy tabernacle, and that He listened to the prayers of those who went there to speak to Him. One day he went to the church to pray for the conversion of his father. Going into the sanctuary, he climbed upon the altar, and sitting there, near the door of the tabernacle, knocked at it with his little hand, saying : " Are you there, Jesus ?"

But there was no answer. He knocked again, saying the same words : " Are you there, Jesus ? They told me at Sunday-school that you were here."

He listened for an answer, but still no answer came. " Perhaps the dear Jesus is asleep ; I will quietly awake Him." " O my dear little Jesus," he said gently, " I believe in Thee and I love Thee ; answer me, I beseech Thee."

Jesus could not refuse to answer the simple and humble prayer of the child, said with so much confidence. A voice came forth from the tabernacle saying : " Yes, My dear child, I am here. My love for you makes Me stay here always. What do you want of Me to-day, My dear little brother ?"

The child answered in a voice broken by sobs : " My father is not a good man ; O my Jesus, make him good, and he will serve Thee and love Thee !"

" Go, my dearest child ; I will grant your prayer."

The child went home all radiant with joy ; Jesus had told him that his prayer would be granted. On the following day his father, of his own accord, went to the church, made a good confession, and became a fervent Christian.

My child, that same Jesus is present on the altar in your own church. He is there because He loves you, and because He desires to bestow on you great graces. Oh, then, when you go into the church, kneel reverently and lovingly before the altar, and say to Him: "My dearest Jesus, I firmly believe that Thou art really present on this altar, and I love Thee with my whole heart."

THE INFANT IN THE CRADLE.

In the year 1144 the kingdom of Brabant had for its chief a little child about a year old. Certain enemies, knowing this, thought that it would be a favourable opportunity for invading Brabant and conquering it. So they declared war against it, and entered it with a great army.

But the people of Brabant were not to be so easily overcome. They took the little child lying in his cradle into the middle of the camp, and when the battle began they hung up the cradle on the branches of a tree, that the soldiers, by seeing the child and hearing its infantile cries, might be encouraged to fight bravely.

The battle raged fiercely, and for some time it was doubtful who were to gain the victory. At one time the invaders seemed to have the advantage, but a cry coming from the cradle inspired the soldiers of Brabant with renewed courage, and with a loud cry they rushed upon the enemy, and cut them to pieces or obliged them to fly from the field. They gained the victory.

If the presence of a weak little child was able thus to give such courage to a great army, and cause

them to gain the victory, how much more easily shall we be able to conquer Satan, that terrible enemy of our souls, when we have Jesus dwelling with us in His Holy Sacrament !

ST. CLARE PROTECTED.

The Emperor Frederic II. came to attack the town of Assisi. His army consisted of men of the lowest rank of society, among whom were many infidels. Near the gate of the city stood a convent of nuns, governed by the holy abbess St. Clare. This was the first place these ruffians attacked. They placed ladders against the walls and prepared to ascend, and it seemed as if in a few moments the spouses of Jesus Christ would fall into the hands of those wicked men. But Jesus was there to help His servants. In this extremity St. Clare called together her nuns, and going into the chapel, she, by an inspiration from Heaven, caused the ciborium containing the Sacred Body of Our Lord, to be carried to the place where the men were already beginning to ascend ; then, with her eyes raised up towards it, she said : " O my beloved Jesus, is it possible that we, Thy servants whom Thou hast brought hither to serve Thee, and whom Thou dost so often nourish with Thy precious Body and Blood, should fall into the hands of those who know Thee not, and who would destroy in us that immaculate purity which belongs to Thee ?"

As soon as she had ended her prayer, there came a voice from Heaven which said in accents of great sweetness : " You shall ever be under My protection."

At the same moment those who were on the ladders were struck with blindness; a sudden panic arose among the rest, and taking the ladders from the wall, they all took to flight as if pursued by an immense army.

Thus did Jesus in His Holy Sacrament protect His servants who prayed to Him with confidence.

The first act that you should make in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is an act of faith, by which you tell Him that you firmly believe in His adorable presence in the Holy Eucharist. You should say to Him something like this: "O my God, I believe that Thou art truly present in this adorable Sacrament because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true." You must believe this as firmly as if you saw Jesus present with your bodily eyes.

ST. THOMAS'S CONFESSION.

On the day when Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples when they were assembled together in the upper chamber at Jerusalem. St. Thomas alone was not with them. When he came in, the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord. Thomas said that he would not believe them. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." "And after eight days," says the Scripture, "His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: 'Peace be to you.' Then He said to Thomas: 'Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and

put it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing.'

" Thomas answered : ' My Lord and my God.' Jesus said to him : ' Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed ; blessed are they who have not seen, yet have believed.' "

KING HENRY IV. OF FRANCE.

Henry IV., King of France, was one day passing along the street with one of his nobles, the Duke of Sullie, who was a heretic, when he happened to meet a priest who was carrying the Blessed Sacrament to a dying person. Immediately the King went down on both knees in the middle of the street to adore Jesus passing by.

When the Duke saw him doing this, he began to laugh at him ; and as they were proceeding on their way, he said to him : " Is it possible that your Majesty can be among the number of those foolish men who believe that Jesus Christ can be there under the appearance of a little bread ?"

The King answered : " Yes ; thanks be to God, I do believe it with my whole heart. The man who disbelieves it, or even doubts it, may well be numbered amongst the greatest fools of the world, because he disbelieves or doubts the word of God himself."

ST. VERONICA SEES JESUS.

St. Veronica of Milan used to see Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament under the form of a little child coming out of the tabernacle and going into it again, and remaining on the altar as long as the consecrated

Host was there. In the year 1489, during the Octave of Corpus Christi, and as the procession of the Blessed Sacrament was passing round the church, the sacred Host disappeared from her sight, and she saw the priest carrying the Child Jesus in the monstrance. Angels also surrounded the priest, and seemed to carry him, while heavenly music sounded in her ears. In this manner did Jesus wish to show to His servant His real and adorable presence in the sacred Host, that by hearing it, our faith also might be strengthened in this adorable mystery.

A HOLY PRIEST'S REQUEST GRANTED.

A certain priest, named Plegil, asked of Our Saviour the favour to be permitted to see Him with his corporal eyes in the Holy Eucharist.

As this request did not proceed from unbelief, but rather from an ardent love, it was granted. One day, during Mass, this pious priest knelt down after the consecration and besought Our Lord anew to grant his request. An angel then appeared to him and bade him arise. He raised his head and saw Our Divine Saviour in the form of a child. Full of joy and reverence, he begged Our Lord to conceal Himself again under the consecrated species, and immediately the Holy Eucharist assumed its usual appearance. This miracle was also witnessed by many other persons who were present.

APPARITION OF JESUS TO ST. CATHERINE.

One day when St. Catherine of Siena was only six years old, her mother sent her to the house of one

of her sisters, called Bonaventura, who was married, and who lived near one of the gates of Siena. Her brother Stephen, who was two years older than she, accompanied her.

As she was returning by his side and was passing the church of the Dominican Fathers, she had a vision. Over the church she saw Our Blessed Lord sitting on a throne, clad in sacred vestments of royal magnificence. This sight filled the heart of the child with joy and love. She saw that Our Lord was gazing lovingly on her, and with a smile of tender affection He gave her His blessing. She stood motionless in the middle of the crowd which passed her on the street, gazing at this vision, which no one saw but herself.

In the meantime Stephen had gone forward without observing that his sister was not with him, but when he turned round and saw her standing in the middle of the street, he called on her to come. But she seemed not to hear him. So, going up to her, he took her by the hand, saying to her in an angry tone : " What are you doing there gazing up to the skies ? Why don't you come ?"

Catherine, as if awakening out of a deep sleep, looked round and said : " O Stephen, if you only saw what I see you would never have disturbed me in so beautiful a vision."

My child, it is that same Jesus Who is in the holy tabernacle ; you cannot indeed see Him as St. Catherine did, but He looks on you with the same loving look, and has the same affection for you as He had for her.

BLESSED BONIFACE SEES JESUS.

One night, when Blessed Boniface was sick, and lay sorrowful on his bed, he complained to the Blessed Virgin of his loneliness. Immediately this compassionate Mother came, bearing in her arms her Divine Son wrapped in swaddling clothes. Going over to the bed, she laid Jesus down at his side. Then the Holy Child, drawing out one hand from the swaddling clothes, raised the cloth that covered His face, as it were to let the holy man gaze upon its beauty.

Boniface, ravished with its comeliness, cried out: "Oh, if in Paradise there were nothing else but that blessed face, it were worth while to suffer all tribulations that we might gaze upon a countenance so glorious."

My child, you see Jesus in the priest's hands, but only with the eyes of faith; when the weary night of your sojourn on earth is ended, you will, like Blessed Boniface, be allowed to gaze on Him in all His eternal beauty.

When you hear the priest saying these words: "Behold the Lamb of God," you should say from your inmost soul: "O Lord, I believe that Thou art present in Thy Divine Sacrament: I believe this as firmly as if I really beheld Thee with my bodily eyes."

SIMON OF MONTFORT'S ANSWER.

One day, when Simon of Montfort was busily engaged in the duties of his daily life, a person came in great haste to him, saying: "Oh, come to the

chapel and see the wonderful thing that has just taken place there; Jesus Christ is present in the Holy Sacrament in a visible manner. Oh, come and see how beautiful He is!"

Simon answered: "No, I will not go; let those go who have any doubts about His adorable presence in this great Sacrament. As for me, I have no need of any miracle to strengthen my faith, for I firmly believe that Jesus is there, and nothing, not even a miracle, could make my faith stronger."

"HE IS LOOKING AT ME, AND I AM LOOKING AT HIM."

There lived, not long ago, at Ars, in France, a very poor man, who could not read, and who had to labour all day for the support of himself and his little family. But his heart was full of the love of Jesus in His adorable Sacrament. Whether going to his work or returning from it, never did that good man pass the church-door without entering to adore Our Lord. He would leave his tools—his spade, hoe, and pickaxe—at the door, and remain for hours together sitting or kneeling before the tabernacle.

The priest, who watched him with great delight, could never perceive the slightest movement of the lips. Being surprised at this, he said to him one day: "My good Father, what do you say to Our Lord in these long visits you pay Him every day, and many times a day?"

"I say nothing to Him," was the reply; "I look at Him, and He looks at me."

Oh, what simple, beautiful faith!

Life of the Blessed Curé of Ars.

BLESSED PETER OF TOULOUSE.

One day, as Blessed Peter of Toulouse held the sacred Host in his hands just before Communion, he suddenly beheld, not the Host, but in its stead a Child of ravishing beauty. The sight filled him with respectful fear, and not daring, through humility, to give his eyes the liberty of looking on Jesus, he closed them, all dazzled as they were with the brightness of His glory.

But Jesus, whose delight is to be with the children of men, still appeared to the holy priest as if his eyes had been wide open. Nor could he turn his eyes away from the sight of that glory, for Jesus, as it were, held his gaze fixed on Himself, filling his soul at the same time with inexpressible sweetness.

BLESSED BEATRICE AT THE ALTAR.

Blessed Beatrice, a holy nun, was one day preparing to go to Communion by making acts of faith and love. When the moment came for approaching the altar, and the priest was saying these heavenly words: "Behold the Lamb of God," she raised up her eyes towards the altar. Oh, heavenly vision! She saw Jesus in a visible manner in the priest's hands, with His arms thrown wide open, as it were waiting with the most intense longing for her coming.

Seeing this, she could not wait till her turn came, but pressed eagerly forward that she might the sooner receive Him. And when that happy moment came, she felt as if she were strained to His heart by a most sweet embrace, her heart being close to

His, and tasting that heavenly sweetness which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive.

TARCISIUS, THE YOUTHFUL MARTYR OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

It was the eve of the great day when the martyrs of Christ were to give testimony of their faith by the shedding of their blood. It was always a day of greater liberty for these soldiers of Christ, and in the evening there was prepared for them a feast at the public expense, abundant and luxurious.

But while the persecutors thus prepared a feast for the bodies of their victims, the Church, their Mother, had been preparing a much more dainty banquet for the souls of her children. The bread of life, the Most Holy Eucharist, had been made ready in sufficient quantity for the martyrs to sustain them in the impending combat, and now nothing remained but to entrust it to faithful hands who might bear it to them.

The holy priest Dionysius, turning round from the altar on which it was placed, looked to see who would be its safest bearer. Before any other could step forward, the young acolyte Tarcisius came and knelt at his feet. With his hands extended before him, ready to receive the sacred deposit, with a countenance beautiful in its lovely innocence as an angel's, he seemed to entreat for preference, and even to claim it.

"Thou art too young, my child," said the kind priest, filled with admiration at the picture before him.

"My youth, holy Father, will be my best protection. Oh, do not refuse me this great honour." The tears stood in the boy's eyes, and his cheeks glowed with a modest emotion, as he spoke these words. He stretched forth his hands eagerly, and his entreaty was so full of fervour and courage that the plea was irresistible. The priest took the Divine Mysteries, wrapped up carefully in a linen cloth, then in an outer covering, and put them on his palms, saying:

"Remember, Tarcisius, what a treasure is entrusted to thy feeble care. Avoid public places as thou goest along, and remember that holy things must not be delivered to dogs, nor pearls cast before swine. Thou wilt keep safely God's sacred gifts?"

"I will rather die than betray them," answered the holy youth, as he folded the heavenly trust in the bosom of his tunic, and with cheerful reverence started on his journey. There was a gravity beyond the usual expression of his years stamped upon his countenance as he tripped lightly along the streets, avoiding equally the more public and the too low thoroughfares.

As he was approaching the door of a large mansion, its mistress, a lady without children, saw him coming, and was struck with his beauty and sweetness, as, with arms folded on his breast, he was hastening on. "Stay one moment, my dear child," she said, putting herself in his way. "Tell me thy name, and where do thy parents live?"

"I am Tarcisius, an orphan boy," he replied, looking up smilingly; "and I have no home, save one which it might be displeasing to thee to hear."

"Then come into my house and rest; I wish to speak with thee. Oh, that I had a child like thee!"

"Not now, noble lady, not now. I have entrusted to me a most solemn and sacred duty, and I must not tarry a moment in its performance."

"Then promise to come to me to-morrow; this is my house."

"If I am alive I will," answered the boy with a kindled look, which made him appear to her as a messenger from a higher sphere. She watched him a long time, and after some deliberation determined to follow him. Soon, however, she heard a tumult with horrid cries, which made her pause on her way, until they had ceased, when she went on again.

In the meantime Tarcisius, with his thoughts fixed on better things than her inheritance, hastened on, and shortly came into an open space, where boys, just escaped from school, were beginning to play.

"We just want one to make up the game. Where shall we get him?" said their leader.

"Capital!" exclaimed another; "here comes Tarcisius, whom I have not seen for an age. He used to be an excellent hand at all sports. Come, Tarcisius," he added, stopping him by seizing his arm, "whither so fast? Take a part in our game, that's a good fellow."

"I can't, Petillius, now; I really can't. I am going on business of great importance."

"But you shall!" exclaimed the first speaker, a strong and bullying youth, laying hold of him. "I will have no sulking when I want anything done. So come, join us at once."

"I entreat you," said the poor boy feelingly, "do let me go."

"No such thing," replied the other. "What is that you seem to be carrying so carefully in your bosom? A letter, I suppose. Well, it will not addle by being for half an hour out of its nest. Give it to me, and I will put it by safe while we play." And he snatched at the sacred deposit in his breast.

"Never, never," said the child, looking up towards Heaven.

"I *will* see it," insisted the other rudely; "I will know what is this wonderful secret." And he commenced pulling him roughly about. A crowd of men from the neighbourhood soon got round, and all asked eagerly what was the matter. They saw a boy who with folded arms seemed endowed with a supernatural strength as he resisted every effort of one much bigger and stronger to make him reveal what he was bearing. Cuffs, pulls, blows, kicks seemed to have no effect. He bore them all without a murmur or an attempt to retaliate; but he unflinchingly kept his purpose.

"What is it? What can it be?" one began to ask the other, when Fulvius, a renegade Christian, chanced to pass by and joined the circle around the combatants. He at once recognized Tarcisius, and being asked, as being a better-dressed man, the same question, he replied contemptuously, as he turned on his heel: "What is it? Why, only a Christian ass bearing the Mysteries."

This was enough. Fulvius, while he scorned such unprofitable prey, knew well the effect of his word.

Heathen curiosity to see the Mysteries of the Christians revealed, and to insult them, was aroused, and a general demand was made to Tarcisius to yield up his charge. "Never with life," was his only reply. A heavy blow from a smith's fist nearly stunned him, while the blood flowed from the wound. Another and another followed, till, covered with bruises, but with his arms crossed fast upon his breast, he fell heavily on the ground. The mob closed upon him, and were just seizing him to tear open his thrice holy trust, when they felt themselves pushed aside right and left by some giant strength. Some went reeling to the farther side of the square, others were spun round and round, and knew not how till they fell where they were, and the rest retired before a tall, athletic officer who was the author of this overthrow. He had no sooner cleared the ground than he was on his knees, and, with tears in his eyes, raised up the bruised, fainting boy as tenderly as a mother could have done, and in most gentle tones asked him: "Art thou much hurt, Tarcisius?"

"Never mind me, Quadratus" (this was the name of the Christian officer), replied he, opening his eyes with a smile; "but I am carrying the Divine Mysteries. Take care of them."

The soldier raised the boy in his arms with tenfold reverence, as if bearing not only the sweet victim of a youthful sacrifice, a martyr's relics, but the very King and Lord of Martyrs and the Divine Victim of eternal salvation. The child's head leaned in confidence on the stout soldier's neck, but his arms and hands never left their watchful custody of the

confided gift; and his gallant bearer felt no weight in the hallowed double burden which he carried. No one stopped him till a lady met him, and stared amazedly at him. She drew nearer and looked close at what he carried. "Is it possible?" exclaimed she with terror. "Is that Tarcisius, whom I met a few moments ago so fair and lovely? Who can have done this?"

"Madam," replied Quadratus, "they have murdered him because he was a Christian."

The lady looked for an instant on the child's countenance. He opened his eyes upon her, smiled, and expired. From that look came the light of Faith; she hastened to become a Christian likewise.

The venerable Dionysius could hardly see for weeping as he removed the child's hands, and took from his bosom, unviolated, the Holy of Holies; and he thought he looked more like an angel now, sleeping the martyr's slumber, than he did when living scarcely an hour before. Quadratus himself bore him to the cemetery of Callistus, where he was buried amidst the admiration of older believers; and later the holy Pope Damasus composed for him an epitaph, which no one can read without concluding that the belief in the Real Presence of Our Lord's Body in the Blessed Eucharist was the same then as now.

"Christ's secret gifts, by good Tarcisius borne,
The mob profanely bade him to display;
He rather gave his own limbs to be torn
Than Christ's celestial to mad dogs betray."

Carmen, XV.

He is mentioned in the Roman Martyrology on August 15, as commemorated in the cemetery of Callistus. CARD. WISEMAN : *Fabiola*, ii., chap. 22.

II. THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

JESUS CHRIST INSTITUTES THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

My child, Jesus cannot be deceived, because He knows all things ; neither can He deceive us, because He is infinitely good. Whatever Jesus Christ says He will do must be done, and whatever He tells us must be true. Let us, therefore, lovingly listen to every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, and humbly say with the man in the Gospel : " O Lord, I believe ; help Thou my unbelief."

" I am the living bread which came down from Heaven," says Our Lord. " If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world.

" The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, ' How can this man give us His flesh to eat ?'

" Then Jesus said to them, ' Amen, Amen, I say to you, Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day ; for My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him.' "

The night before He suffered Jesus fulfilled the promise He had made of giving us His flesh and blood to be our meat and drink. For when He was

sitting at table with His disciples around Him, He said to them: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer."

Then, taking bread into His hands, He blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying: "Take ye and eat; this is My body." And taking the chalice He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood."

The disciples then reverently received from Our Lord's hands His body and blood in Holy Communion, and thus was His promise fulfilled.

But, my child, Jesus desired to give Himself to you as well as to them; so, in order that you might possess this most precious gift, He gave the Apostles the power of doing what He Himself had done.

As soon as the Apostles had received Him in Communion, He said to them: "Do this for a commemoration of Me"; as if He had said: "You see what I have done: how I changed the bread and wine into My body and blood, and how I distributed it to you. Do, then, what I have done. Consecrate the bread and wine as you have seen Me do, and distribute it to others as I did to you. I give you that power."

But not only to them did Jesus grant this sublime power, but also to those who were to succeed them in their sacred office—to the Bishops and priests of His Church—to the end of time. So, my child, give eternal thanks to Jesus for His goodness to you in bestowing on you this admirable gift, and show your gratitude to Him by often receiving Him in Communion according to His desire, and receiving Him with a heart overflowing with love.

My child, it is easy for Jesus Christ to change bread and wine into His body and blood, because He is God, and can do all things.

THE INFINITE POWER OF GOD.

Two ladies were once conversing together ; the one was a Catholic and the other a Protestant. They were disputing on the subject of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Adorable Sacrament.

" It is quite impossible," said the Protestant lady, " that the body and blood of Jesus can be really present under the appearance of bread and wine. How *could* it be possible ?"

" Do you believe in God ?" asked the Catholic.

" Most certainly," said the other.

" And do you believe that God can do all things ?"

" Yes ; God can do all things because He is almighty."

" Then, if you believe that God can do all things, why do you say that He cannot do this ? How can anything be impossible or difficult to Him who can do all things ?"

" But I cannot understand it," said the other.

The Catholic answered : " Is God, then, obliged to limit His works to the things you can understand ? Is it not enough that Jesus Christ should tell us that He has done it ? It is as easy for Him to change the bread and wine into His body and blood as it was for Him to create the world out of nothing."

My child, it is your duty not to try and understand the hidden things of God's wisdom, but to believe His holy word.

THE DOCTOR'S ANSWER.

Clot Bey was the first among the doctors of Egypt in modern times. One day he was standing with other young doctors on one of the streets of Marseilles, in which town he spent the latter years of his life. It happened that a priest was passing along the street, carrying Holy Viaticum to a dying person.

As soon as the doctor saw him, he reverently uncovered his head and bent down towards the ground in an attitude of adoration. One of his younger companions, on seeing this, asked him why he was acting in that manner.

"Do you not see?" he exclaimed; "the good God is passing by."

"O master," said the other, with a smile of unbelief on his countenance, "is it possible that you believe that the great God of Heaven could be contained in the Host which the priest is carrying in his hands?"

"Yes, I believe it," answered the doctor firmly. "You others who speak of His greatness know indeed His power, but you do not know His love."

Ah, yes, my child, the love of Jesus for you is infinite, and it is in the Holy Eucharist that He shows you this love. Oh, thank Him, then, with all the powers of your soul for this infinite gift, and love Him in return as much as you are able.

III. TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

My child, Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist under the species of bread and wine, so that after the consecration He is wholly

and entirely under every particle of what appears to be bread, and every drop of what appears to be wine. This is effected by the power of God, to whom nothing is impossible, and we must believe it without doubting, not because we can understand it, but because God has revealed it, and the Church teaches it to us. This is what is meant by Transubstantiation.

VISION OF THE VENERABLE PRIOR OF GUADELOUPE.

We read in the chronicles of the Order of St. Jerome that the Venerable Peter, prior of Guadeloupe, was at one time strongly tempted to doubt the real presence of Jesus under each of the Sacramental species. Although he vigorously dispelled the temptation, yet he felt, deep down in his heart, a voice which was continually saying to him: "How can it be possible that the sacred Host can contain the precious blood without some drops falling from it, and also still retaining its pure whiteness."

This thought, therefore, continued to torment him day after day, yet he committed no sin against faith, for in his heart he believed.

But God, Who delights to help those who are in tribulation, came in a wonderful manner to the aid of His servant, and by the prayers of Our Lady, whose devout client Peter was, delivered him from his doubts.

One Saturday, as he was celebrating Mass in honour of Our Lady, after the consecration he bowed down towards the altar in the usual manner to recite the prayer: "We suppliantly beseech Thee," etc., and when he raised up his head he beheld, coming down upon the altar, a wonderful

cloud, which the next moment covered the altar, and hid from his eyes the sacred species before him.

Affrighted at this wonder, he felt the blood run cold in his veins, and great trouble came upon him, because he could not continue the Holy Sacrifice. After reflecting for a few moments on what he should do, he fervently besought Our Lord, with tears in his eyes, to help him in his present necessity, and to grant him forgiveness for his want of faith; for he considered that this cloud was expressive of the blindness of his own soul. Hardly had he ended his prayer when the cloud seemed to rise up and leave the altar uncovered before his eyes.

But scarcely had he recovered from his first terror than another caused him to tremble. The sacred Host was no longer lying on the corporal, and there was not a drop of the most precious blood in the uncovered chalice. Full of fear, he had again recourse to God, asking pardon for his little faith, and acknowledging that he was unworthy to offer up the Most Holy Sacrifice of the altar on account of his sins.

In his distress he also had recourse to his heavenly patroness, the Queen of Heaven, in whose honour he was celebrating the Mass, and in whose protection he placed all his hopes. Raising his eyes upwards, he beheld suspended in the air a brilliant paten, from which proceeded rays of light which filled the whole church. At the same time he saw the paten descend towards the altar and on it the sacred Host, which remained in an upright position over the chalice. Immediately he saw the drops of blood coming forth from the Host and falling into the

chalice, until there was as much in it as he had put in of wine at the offertory, after which the Host placed itself on the corporal in front of the chalice, and the pall of itself covered the chalice.

The good priest at the sight of these wonders, and undecided what to do, heard a voice near him, which said : " Continue and finish the Holy Mass, and keep as a great secret that which you have just seen, for it was for you alone that God vouchsafed this vision, that you might no longer doubt His power, and believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ under each of the appearances of bread and wine."

The holy man made known to no one what had taken place, and which neither the one who served him at Mass, nor any of those who were present had seen, although they could not account for the length of time he had taken, nor for the tears that came forth from his eyes. But before leaving this world he considered that it might be well to make it known to others for the glory of God, and the confirmation in the faith of the Real Presence in those who might have any temptation to doubt as he once had. He therefore drew up an authentic document narrating these facts, asserting in it that, from the time God had so favoured him, he never was again assailed with that temptation.

Merveilles Divines dans la S. Eucharistie, i.

" HE IS THERE ! SEE, SEE, THE BEAUTIFUL CHILD !"

Douai is a town of importance in the Northern Department of France, on the right of the great thoroughfare which leads from Arras to Cambrai.

In that town, on April 14, 1254, which was about the great feast of Easter, a priest was giving Holy Communion to the people in the Church of St. Amé. One of the particles, by mistake, fell from his fingers upon the ground. Full of awe and respect, he knelt down with the greatest reverence to take it up ; but the sacred Host of its own accord rose up from the ground and placed itself on the corporal on the altar.

The priest at this wonder cried out aloud, and attracted the attention of the Canons and the faithful. When they looked towards the altar they beheld on the corporal a little Child of amazing beauty, full of life, and smiling on them. The news soon spread throughout the town, and the people with one accord ran in haste to the church of the miracle, and all, without distinction, beheld the heavenly vision.

" When I heard of it," writes Thomas Cantimprensis, to whom we are indebted for the account of this miracle, " I also went immediately to Douai. On reaching the house of the Dean of St. Amé, who was an intimate friend of mine, I asked him to take me to the church where the miracle had occurred. He immediately went with me. The Host of the miracle had, in the meantime, been reverently placed in the tabernacle ; but the church was filled with the faithful, eager to obtain again a glimpse of the Divine countenance of Our Lord. As soon as the priest opened the tabernacle, a cry arose simultaneously from every part of the church : ' He is there ! See, see, the beautiful Child, our Divine Saviour !' I was filled with amazement as

I stood looking into the tabernacle, for what appeared to the rest in the form of a little Child appeared to me only under the usual form of bread. I was more and more astonished, and wondered why I could not behold what every other one saw. I examined my conscience, but could not see therein any fault of which I had been guilty which might have prevented me from seeing the visible presence of my Lord and Saviour.

"As these thoughts were passing through my mind, I suddenly saw a most wonderful thing. Jesus Christ appeared to me, not indeed as a little Child—the form in which the others saw Him—but as a full-grown Man. On His head was a crown of thorns, and two great drops of blood trickled down from His forehead, one on each side of the nose. Instantly I fell on my knees, and with tears in my eyes I adored my Saviour, Who had thus, in so special a manner, showed Himself to me. Then I rose up. To my astonishment there was now no longer on His head the crown of thorns, nor the two drops of blood on His forehead, but His face appeared to me to be that of a man of the most venerable appearance, more so than can possibly be expressed. It was turned a little to the right, so that the right eye was scarcely visible to me. The nose was long and straight, the eyes very meek, and looking towards the ground, the hair long and falling over the shoulders. The beard, which seemed never to have been touched by a razor, gave Him a youthful but still a venerable appearance. The forehead was broad, and the cheeks gave Him the appearance of an ascetic. The head,

as well as the neck, were lengthened, and the head was bent forward somewhat. Such was the vision I saw, and the appearance of that beautiful countenance which I was permitted to behold.

" During the space of an hour the vision assumed various appearances, and Our Lord appeared in different ways to different people. To some He appeared as if attached to the cross; to others He seemed to be the Judge of the living and the dead; but to most He appeared as in the beginning, under the form of a little Child."

Every year the inhabitants of Douai celebrate this feast with great pomp, and every hundred years there is a solemn commemoration of the event extending over several days. HAUTERIVE, x. 89.

IV. On the Love of Jesus for Us in the Holy Eucharist.

My child, the Holy Eucharist is called by the Church the Sacrament of Love. It is true that God has always loved us, but it is in this Sacrament in particular that He shows us the greatness of His love. For what greater mark of love could He give us than to make Himself our very food and to take up His abode continually with us ?

THE CHILD JESUS AND THE PRIEST.

One Christmas night Walthin, the holy Abbot of Melrose, in Scotland, was offering up the Holy Sacrifice with great piety and devotion.

When he had pronounced the sacred words of consecration, he saw in his hands a little Boy more

beautiful than anyone he had ever seen, who wore on His head a crown glittering with jewels, and shining with a brightness greater even than that of the sun. The Child was white as snow; His eyes were fixed lovingly on him, and with His little hands He was fondly caressing him.

Walthin's heart was filled with heavenly rapture as his eyes were fixed on those of Jesus. Yielding to the desire that came into his mind, he reverently kissed the hands and the feet of his beloved Saviour, while the tears of joy that fell from his eyes flowed down his cheeks.

The Holy Child, at length lifting up His little hand, made over the saintly Abbot the sign of the Cross, and then disappeared from his sight, and in his hands there remained only the sacred Host which had just been consecrated.

Every time the holy man recalled to mind this vision, fresh tears of happiness would stream from his eyes, and his heart glowed with a greater love of Jesus, Who had manifested Himself so lovingly to him.

V. The Holy Eucharist "The Mystery of Faith."

TESTIMONY OF SOME OF THE ANCIENT FATHERS.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote: "Do not judge of this matter by how it appears to the taste, but by the faith which God has implanted in you. For in this Sacrament our faith assures us with infallible certainty that you really and truly partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ."

The following are the words of St. Ambrose concerning this great Sacrament: "Before the words of consecration are pronounced the Body of Jesus Christ is not there; but after the words of consecration are uttered, the bread becomes the Body of Christ. 'He said that it was to be made, and it was made; He commanded that it should be created, and it was created.'"

In the sermons of St. John Chrysostom we read the following words: "Where is the shepherd who feeds his flock with his own blood? What do I ask when I say this of a shepherd? There are to be found even mothers who, after having suffered the pains of childbirth, hand over their children to be nourished by other women. It is not thus that Jesus Christ treats His sheep, for He feeds them with His own Body and Blood."

All the Fathers of the Church speak to us in the same manner, and it has been the belief of the faithful in all lands and at all times. We also, my child, in the fullness of our grateful hearts, should humbly cast ourselves on our knees in the presence of this august Sacrament, and exclaim with the devout man in the Gospel: "O Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief."

VI. The Holy Eucharist the Chief Object of Our Love.

THE LITTLE SILVER DOVE—A LEGEND.

In a convent at Naples renowned for its regularity and fervour lived a pious child named Columba. The meaning of that name is "a dove."

Gentle, timid, and pure as the bird whose name she bore, Columba was the joy of her companions and the pride of her aunt, who was the Abbess of the convent.

The child, although only six years old, thought only of Jesus, spoke only of Jesus, and her one great desire already was to receive Him in Holy Communion.

In those days the Blessed Sacrament was not shut up in a tabernacle of stone, as is now most usually done, but placed in a little vase of silver or gold, suspended from the roof before the altar. This little vase most frequently was fashioned like a dove. What more beautiful or touching emblem could be imagined !

Often did little Columba kneel before the altar in the church, and lovingly gaze on the dove suspended over her, and often did she say in her infantile voice : " Ah, if only the dove would come down, and bring me Him Whom I love !"

Day by day did the holy child kneel there, and day by day were her visits prolonged. But very soon, like the lily, she began to droop her head, and her cheeks became pale, and she languished because her beloved would not come. Sadly and plaintively she cried out amidst her tears : " Come, my sister dove, and bring me Him Whom I love."

In a short time her countenance lost all its freshness ; her lips no longer smiled, her eyes were no longer bright ; but she would still drag her weary limbs to the place in which she loved to kneel, near to her favourite dove in which abode her Jesus, and again and again she would say : " Ah if only

the dove could come down and bring me Him Whom I love!"

But the dove did not descend, and Columba became still more pale, and so weak that the Sisters had to carry her into the church. They would place her under the silver dove, and for long hours would she fix her eyes on it in an ecstasy of love. The dove, too, seemed to smile on its little companion, when she would say to it: "Come, my sister, and bring me Him Whom I love."

One day, when her weakness had so much increased, they feared to carry her to the altar; but after many prayers and entreaties they yielded. She wanted so much to behold her Jesus again. When they entered the sanctuary they laid her down as usual before the altar and under the dove. Columba then entreated them to leave her alone with Jesus for a little time, and they, inwardly inspired by God and not willing to disappoint her, departed and left her, all but one of her companions who loved her most. She hid behind one of the pillars in silence to watch over her.

Columba, thinking that there was no one near, crossed her arms over her breast, and, raising up her eyes lovingly towards the dove, said: "Ah, if only you would come down and bring me Him Whom I love!"

And, wonderful to narrate, at that same moment the dove descended gently and placed itself before her. At the same time a luminous cloud suddenly enveloped her as with a transparent veil, hiding her from the eyes of the watcher.

On seeing this great wonder her companion arose

in haste, and informed the Abbess and the Sisters, who immediately returned to the church. But the dove had mounted upwards and hung in its usual place, and Columba appeared to be absorbed in prayer. When they approached nearer they saw that her eyes were closed, and that although a sweet smile played upon her lips her heart no longer beat.

The soul of the innocent child had ascended to Heaven leaning on her beloved Jesus, and the priest found one Host less in the dove of the altar.

Les Veillés des Adorateurs du S.S., p. 274.

VII. On Visiting Jesus Dwelling on our Altars.

My child, if you had some dear friend living near you, you would often go to see him, and the dearer he was to you, the oftener you would visit him. Our dear Lord is always present in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, waiting for you to go to visit Him. Try, then, to go there very often, that you may get a share of the blessings He bestows on those who go to visit Him.

FATHER LOUIS AT OUR LORD'S FEET.

Father Louis la Nusa, a great missionary of Sicily, was, even when a young student in the world, so much attached to Jesus Christ that it seemed as if he could hardly tear himself away from the presence of his beloved Lord, on account of the great delight he found in His company; and being commanded by his director not to remain before the Blessed Sacrament longer than an hour at a time,

when that period had elapsed it was as difficult for him to separate himself from the presence of Jesus as for an infant to tear itself from its mother's breast.

The writer of his life says that when he was forced to leave the church, he would stand looking at the altar, and turn again and again towards it as if he could not take leave of his Lord, whose presence was so sweet and consoling.

A PIOUS PRACTICE OF ST. ELIZABETH.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary was accustomed even in her childhood to visit Jesus Christ often in the Blessed Sacrament. If she found the church closed, she would affectionately kiss the lock of the door and the walls of the church for love of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

ST. ALPHONSUS'S LESSON.

When St. Alphonsus Ligouri was an old man, and could not leave his room, his greatest grief was that he could no longer go to visit Jesus present in the holy tabernacle. "Do you not know," he used to say, "that you may obtain more by a quarter of an hour's prayer before the altar than by all the other devotions of the day put together?"

BLESSED BERTHA'S COUNSELLOR.

The Blessed Bertha of Oberried, in Alcase, being one day asked by one of her sisters in religion how she could discharge so many distracting duties without prejudice to her piety, replied: "Whenever I am entrusted with an office, I go to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. He is my Com-

forter, my Lord, my best Counsellor, and I do what He inspires me to do."

My child, if you were to visit Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament only for a quarter of an hour each day, from how many trials and hardships you would be delivered, from how many temptations and attacks of the devil you would be preserved, how few sins you would commit, and how much more consolation and peace of heart you would enjoy!

ST. THOMAS OF AQUIN IN THE THUNDERSTORM.

One day a terrible storm broke over the city where St. Thomas of Aquin dwelt. Full of terror, the religious ran hither and thither in the cloisters, looking for a place of shelter, for the lightning threatened to strike the house and bury them all in the ruins. St. Thomas also left his cell, but it was to take shelter where his heart told him he would be most secure—in the church at the foot of the tabernacle.

Ascending the steps of the altar, he lovingly placed his head against the door of the tabernacle, and waited there till the storm passed. He then returned to his cell and peacefully resumed his study and his prayers.

So also, my child, when the terrible storms of your passions arise within you, or when the temptations of the world press upon you from without, run for shelter to the tabernacle; it is there that, like St. Thomas, you will find that calm he felt when everyone else was in terror, and, like him, you will, when the temptation is over, return calmly to your duties.

XLI

THE HOLY EUCHARIST—HOLY COMMUNION

I. The Food of our Souls.

Jesus Christ has given Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist to be the life and food of our souls. "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me"; "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." We receive Jesus Christ into our souls when we go to Holy Communion.

"Behold, I come!" My child, such is the sweet announcement Jesus makes to you from His altar-throne. He says to you what He said to His Apostles when He sat down with them at His Last Supper: "With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you." "The hour has at last come which I have looked forward to for so long a time, when I am to give Myself to you in the Sacrament of My love. Behold, I come!"

THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

The Blessed in Heaven are with God. The presence of God is their happiness. To be with Jesus should also be our happiness on earth. Blessed indeed are those souls to whom Jesus comes in His Holy Sacrament.

St. Isemberg, after living a holy life in the Monastery of Hemmenrode, went to Heaven to receive the reward promised to the faithful children of God. But before leaving this world, God was pleased to show him in a vision, as far as mortal eyes can see them, the joys of Paradise.

" Brethren," he said to those around him, " I have seen things so beautiful; those unutterable good things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

The abbot said to him: " What did you see, brother ?"

He answered: " I was taken up this night into Heaven, and I saw the great Queen of Heaven, Our Lady, who promised to help me to the end. I have seen Jesus Himself. Oh, how sweet is the Lord to those who taste and see Him ! Oh, how great and delicious is the sweetness He has made me to experience this night ! How far it exceeds all thought of man ! I taste it in my heart, but I cannot express it by my lips. Oh, how happy are those blessed ones who shall enjoy the presence of God in Heaven for ever and for ever ! If God were to show you what I have seen, you would utterly despise all worldly glory."

When he had said these words he died, and entered for all eternity into the presence of God Who is the Joy of the Blessed.

" Behold, I come." Jesus comes to us in our exile, as the Church tells us, that by receiving Him we may have a pledge of eternal life. This is also the promise He Himself made to those who partake of His Divine banquet: " I will raise them up at the last day.'

DEATH OF ST. MECHTILDIS.

When St. Mechtildis was at the point of death, her soul was filled with intense happiness, because she saw that the hour had at last come when she would see her beloved Jesus face to face in all His glory.

One of the sisters who was present tells us what she saw and heard. As she was near her end, Jesus appeared to her and said: "My glory! My joy! wilt thou come and dwell for ever with Me?" And as she breathed her last, another of the nuns saw Jesus coming to meet her and receive her pure soul, saying these words: "Come, My chosen one, my dove, into the garden of rest, in which thy virtues shall bloom in everlasting glory."

BLESSED JULIANA'S DESIRE GRANTED.

Blessed Juliana was Abbess of a convent in Italy in the thirteenth century. The virtue which shone most brightly in her was love for Jesus in His Sacred Infancy, and as she burned with the desire of beholding Him with her bodily eyes, she besought Our Lady, in earnest prayer, to grant her this favour.

This prayer was at length answered. One day an angel came down from Heaven into her cell and placed the Divine Child in her arms, so that she was able to contemplate and caress Him. From that moment till her happy death, her life seemed tedious to her, so great was her desire to die, that she might see Him for ever in Heaven.

Jesus is now coming to you, my child. He is about to lay Himself, not in your arms, but in your heart. What a consolation this should be to you!

ST. IGNATIUS, MARTYR.

When St. Ignatius of Antioch was cited before the tribunal of the Emperor Trajan, he confessed his faith in Jesus Christ without fear, even with joy.

"It is," he said, "by the strength of Jesus Christ, Who dwells in my heart, although His throne is in the highest Heavens, that I overcome all the attacks of my enemy, Satan, for there is only one God, Who made Heaven and earth, and Jesus Christ is His only begotten Son."

Trajan asked him: "Do you mean that Jesus Whom Pontius Pilate condemned to die on the cross in Jerusalem?"

"Yes," replied Ignatius; "He is the only Son of God, and He dwells in my heart."

"So you boast that you carry Him within you," said the Emperor.

"Yes, O Emperor," answered the martyr, "and this is my greatest joy; for He has said: 'I will dwell in the midst of them, and the place of My repose shall be in their hearts.'"

Your heart also, my child, is in Holy Communion the dwelling-place of that same Jesus. Oh, welcome Him, then, with joy and gratitude!

BLESSED FRANCIS'S LOVE FOR JESUS.

Blessed Francis of the Holy Child Jesus, as the time drew near when he was to receive Holy Communion, seemed to be lost in a kind of ecstasy. "Oh, my beloved Jesus, how long appear to me those hours that must pass before You come to me!" Then, as the clock struck the hours, he would say:

"Thanks be to God, I have only six hours, five hours, four hours to wait." And as it drew nearer the time for Mass, his eager longing seemed to increase. At last when the hour struck which announced the beginning of Mass, he joyfully exclaimed: "Behold! He comes at last! Come, let us go to receive Him, Who is our Creator, our Saviour, our Jesus, our All."

ELIAS IN THE DESERT.

The prophet Elias was persecuted by the wicked Queen Jezabel, because he foretold, in the Name of God, the evils that were to befall her on account of her sins. She at last became so angry that she threatened to take away his life.

When the prophet heard this, he left the city and went into the wilderness, that he might escape death. At the end of the first day's journey he was very weary and hungry, for he had eaten nothing all that day, and the sun's rays had been falling on him since the morning, so he sat down under a tree, and said to God: "O my God, I cannot go any farther: let me die."

When he had said this, "behold an angel of the Lord," says the Scripture, "touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat.' He looked, and behold, there was at his head a hearth-cake, and a vessel of water: and he ate and drank, and he fell asleep again.

"And the angel of the Lord came a second time, and touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat: for thou hast yet a great way to go.' And he arose, and ate, and drank, and walked in the strength of

that food forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God" (3 Kings xix.).

My child, the food that Elias ate is a symbol of the Divine Eucharist, which feeds our souls in the wilderness of this world, and enables us to reach the true mountain of God, which is Heaven. Let us, then, at God's command, often eat of it, that we may receive the strength that will bring us to Heaven.

II. On the Union of the Soul with Jesus in Holy Communion.

"Thanks be to Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of men, Who, to manifest to the whole world Thy love, hast prepared a great supper, wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but Thy most sacred Body and Blood, rejoicing all the faithful with Thy holy banquet, and inebriating them with the chalice of salvation, in which are all the delights of Paradise."

St. Veronica at her Mother's Side.

St. Veronica Juliana during her whole life had a great love for Jesus in His Most Holy Sacrament. When she was only three years old, and too young to receive Communion, she used to go very close to her mother after she had communicated, and cling to her dress.

One day her mother took notice of this, and asked her why she clung to her so closely.

"O mother," replied the child, "you taste of Jesus and you smell of Jesus."

A PIOUS YOUNG LADY'S CONSOLATION.

" Oh, what a happiness it is to think," said a pious young lady to one of her companions, " that every time I go to Holy Communion I have Jesus Christ Himself in my heart. I have within me at that moment that very God Who, in Heaven, is the Joy of the Blessed. And is it not a consolation to think that He is more anxious to unite Himself to me than I can be to unite myself to Him ? Oh, then, let us always seek to be with Him, since it is His most ardent desire. With Him in our souls, we shall very easily overcome temptations ; we shall easily obtain eternal life in Heaven."

A VISION OF JESUS AND MARY.

Blessed Angela of Foligno was one day, early in the morning, in the church saying her prayers, when she had a vision, which she herself relates in the following words : " I was rapt in spirit, and I beheld Our Blessed Lady enter the church. My soul was filled with intense joy when I saw her, but for a time I was afraid to go near her. But Our Lady, seeing my hesitation, held out to me the Holy Child Jesus, saying : ' O thou who lovest my Divine Son so much, come and take Him from me.'

" She then placed Him in my arms. He seemed to be asleep, for His eyes were shut. Then she sat down as if she were fatigued after a long journey. She looked so lovely as she sat beside me that I could scarcely withdraw my eyes from her to look at her Holy Child whom I was pressing to my breast.

"At this moment Jesus opened His eyes and looked lovingly on me; this look filled my soul with so much joy that I would have died on the spot had He not sustained me by His divine power. He then said to me: 'I have come to you, and have presented Myself before you that you may offer yourself to Me.' Immediately I did as He desired, and I knew that the offering was pleasing to Him."

In Holy Communion Jesus comes and places Himself, not on our arms nor on our breast, but in our very hearts, and becomes so closely united to us as to become one with us.

III. Preparation for Holy Communion.

Although Our Blessed Lord invites us to receive Him into our souls in Holy Communion—nay, more, even commands us to do so—He requires on our part a suitable preparation for His reception both in soul and body.

The Catechism tells us in a few words in what this preparation consists. It says: "In order to receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily it is required that we be in a state of grace, and fasting from midnight. To be in a state of grace," it continues, "is to be free from mortal sin, and pleasing to God."

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

When King David was about to build the great Temple at Jerusalem, he gathered together all the riches of his kingdom, gold and silver and precious stones. The people also brought to him, at his request, their richest possessions. "And all they

that had precious stones gave them to the treasures of the house of the Lord; and the people rejoiced, when they promised their offerings willingly, because they offered them to the Lord with all their heart.

"And David assembled all the chief men of Israel, and standing, said, 'Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had a thought to build a house in which the ark of the Lord and the footstool of Our God might rest, and I prepared all things for the building. The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man, but for God.'"

My child, if that holy King did so much to prepare a place wherein the ark might rest, how much greater should be your zeal to prepare a worthy dwelling-place for God Himself in your heart.

ALPHONSUS OF ARAGON.

Alphonsus, King of Aragon, whose piety was equal to his greatness, went to visit one of the nobles of his kingdom a little before the festival of Christmas.

This nobleman, although possessed of much wealth, neglected his religious duties, and was leading a very sinful life. When he heard that his sovereign was about to honour him with a visit, he made great preparations, and received him with all the honour due to his dignity. The King was pleased with these marks of respect, and when about to leave, he said to him: "Most noble lord, you have given me a magnificent reception, and I thank you for it with all my heart; but in a few days a nobler King than I will come and ask you to give Him a suitable welcome. Jesus Christ, the King

of kings, on His Christmas festival, will invite you to receive Him into your heart in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, I beseech you, go now and prepare your heart to receive Him, and if you adorn it as sumptuously as you have adorned your palace for my reception, you may expect from Him a great share of His heavenly graces."

The nobleman took these words to heart, and on Christmas Day had the happiness of receiving his Lord and Master worthily in Holy Communion, to the joy and edification of all the faithful.

LITTLE MARIE.

In a little village called Dijon, in France, it happened that during the late great war between France and Prussia the scouts of the latter army appeared one evening, and gave notice that a detachment of the troops would halt there that night, and as no other building in the place was large enough to hold them, that the soldiers would have to sleep in the church.

What made the matter worse was the absence of the priest. He had been summoned to a dying person at a distance, and would not be able to return that night.

The difficulty was how to remove the Blessed Sacrament to a place of safety. First they asked a young man who acted as sacristan, but he refused. Each one advised his neighbour to take courage and do what the priest would have done, but none were willing to undertake it.

At last a poor man said : " My Marie is four years old. She is a little angel. I will, if you please,

carry her to the altar ; and when the tabernacle is opened she will take Our Blessed Lord in her little hands, and she will hold Him fast in her arms whilst I carry her into the sacristy. Nobody but she will have touched the ciborium, and the good God will be in safety this night."

The villagers cried out : " Yes, let this be done," and the father brought the child. They watched the little girl clasping Our Lord to her bosom, and they saw her borne triumphantly to the sacristy in the arms of her father ; and when the holy task was done, they showered blessings on the little child, who in her innocence had not been afraid to approach so closely to Jesus.

When you go to Communion, my child, you not only carry Jesus, but you are His Holy Tabernacle. Holy Purity is the great virtue He hopes to find in your soul.

JESUS AND THE PIOUS NUN.

One day a pious nun had a vision when the people, during Mass, were kneeling at the altar to receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

When the priest came down from the altar holding the Blessed Sacrament in his hands, she saw Jesus in the sacred Host in a visible manner ; and, as the priest was distributing Holy Communion, she saw Jesus stretch out His arms towards some of them, as if He were impatient to reach them, and seemed most eager to unite Himself to them. At the same time she saw Him show signs of great disgust as He approached others, and seemed to try to turn away from them.

On seeing this, the nun said to Him : " O my Lord Jesus, why do You seem so unwilling to enter into these ? They seem to be as devout as the others."

Jesus replied : " My daughter, the souls into whom you see Me enter so gladly are those who are always seeking to please Me, and who have prepared themselves well to receive Me ; those others of whom you speak are tepid Christians, full of faults and sins. To your eyes they appear as pious as the others, but to Me, Who can see their hearts, and to Whom the secrets of their consciences are made known, they appear very different indeed."

THE ANGEL AT THE ALTAR.

St. Piammon, a holy priest, who lived not far from Diolgue, on the coasts of Partenia, was one day favoured with a vision.

As he was saying Mass he saw an angel of God standing at the side of the altar, having in his hand a book and a pen.

When the time came for the people to go up to Communion, he saw the angel preparing to write something in the book. And as he gave Communion to the people, the angel followed him, writing down the names of some and leaving out those of others.

When the Mass was ended, Piammon asked the angel why he wrote down the names of some and left out those of others. " Some of those you left out," he said, " seemed to me to be even more fervent than those whose names you inscribed."

" Know, then," said the angel, " that I wrote down the names of those only who received Com-

munion worthily. Satan wrote down the names of the others in his book, as a remembrance against them at the tribunal of Jesus Christ. Those whose names I left out, whom you thought to be so fervent, were only hypocrites, who, by their pretended devotion, sought to deceive the faithful ; but at the Day of Judgment God will reveal their evil deeds to the whole world."

ST. STANISLAUS COMMUNICATED BY ANGELS.

When St. Stanislaus was about sixteen years old he became very ill, and thinking that he was about to die, he asked the master of the house in which he lodged to go for a priest, that he might receive the last Sacraments before he died. But the man, who was a heretic, would not do this. Stanislaus was grieved beyond measure at this refusal, and seeing that he could not obtain his request from man, he had recourse to the Saints, and prayed to St. Barbara, the patroness of a happy death, that she would obtain for him the grace of receiving the Sacraments before he died.

His prayer was heard, for God sent two angels from Heaven to communicate him.

In the following year he received a similar favour. As he was travelling in disguise to go to a certain house of his Order, and was passing through the town of Augsburg, he saw a church open, and a large number of people entering it. Thinking that it was a Catholic Church, he also went in, hoping to hear Mass, and to receive Holy Communion. He had not knelt long when he saw that it belonged to heretics. This filled him with sadness, not only

because he saw the House of God profaned by heretical worship, but also because he knew that he would be deprived of Holy Communion. And as he knelt there weeping, behold, there came into the church a group of angels, who were seen by none but himself, and one of them reverently gave him Holy Communion. When this was done, they returned to Heaven, and the young Saint was left alone with His God.

It is universally believed that the youthful Saint received these miraculous favours from God on account of his virginal purity.

THE VISION OF THE DEVOUT COMMUNICANT.

Father Hunolt, of the Society of Jesus, relates that two students once agreed that, if God would allow it, he who should die first would appear to the other and tell him how he fared in the next world.

Shortly afterwards one of them died, and appeared, by permission of God, to his fellow-student, all shining with heavenly glory, and told him that by the mercy of God he was saved, and was in possession of the bliss of Heaven. The other congratulated him on his happiness, and asked him how he had merited such unspeakable glory and bliss.

The happy soul replied : " By the care with which I always endeavoured to receive Holy Communion with a pure heart."

At these words the spirit disappeared, leaving in the other feelings of great consolation, and an ardent desire of imitating his great devotion, that he might one day join him in Heaven in the possession of the same unspeakable joy.

IV. Acts Before Communion.

Before you approach the altar to receive Holy Communion you should try to rouse up within you those pious sentiments which will please Our Lord most when He comes into your soul. You have already told Him that you are sorry for offending Him, and that you love Him ; tell Him now that, although you are most unworthy of approaching Him, you will go to Him with confidence and an ardent desire of possessing Him.

My child, we always desire to be in the company of those whom we love, and if we are far away from them, we look forward earnestly to the moment when we shall see them again. If you love Jesus as you ought, your heart must be filled with the desire of possessing Him, and you must be looking forward with great earnestness to the moment of Holy Communion, when He will come and take up His dwelling within you.

THE PILGRIM'S DESIRE FULFILLED.

St. Bernardine of Siena tells us of a gentleman, well known for his fervour and piety, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

He first stopped at Nazareth, where the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished. He then proceeded to Bethlehem, to kneel at the spot in which Our Lord first deigned to visit this earth as a suffering Infant.

He next walked by the banks of the Jordan, the scene of Our Lord's baptism ; and went to the desert which had witnessed the forty days' fast ; to the

mountain where Jesus was transfigured ; to the house at Jerusalem consecrated by the institution of the Holy Eucharist ; to the Garden of Olives ; and to Calvary, where Jesus died. He visited the scene of Our Lord's burial and resurrection, and finally ascended Mount Olivet, fondly recalling to mind the blessing which He gave to His Apostles before His ascension. After visiting every place which was in any way connected with Our Lord's life or death, with a heart glowing with love, he exclaimed : " O Jesus, Jesus, my much-beloved Saviour, since I can no longer follow Thy footsteps on earth, take me to Thyself in Heaven, that I may see Thee face to face—Thee Whom I love with my whole heart."

His prayer was immediately heard, for no sooner was it uttered than he expired. The intensity of his love for Jesus, and his ardent desire of being with Him, had broken his heart ; and after death these words were found engraved on his breast : " Jesus, my Love !"

Try, my child, to have in your heart also a great desire of seeing Him in Heaven. The surest way of obtaining this happiness is to have a great desire of being with Him in His Holy Sacrament, for He has promised eternal life to those who, while yet in this world, " eat His Body and drink His Blood."

DESIRE TO RECEIVE JESUS.

When St. Alphonsus was lying on his death-bed he asked the Fathers to give him Holy Communion since he could no longer say Mass.

One day, when there was some delay in bringing the Blessed Sacrament, he began to cry out aloud :

" Oh, give me my dear Lord ! When will you bring me my Jesus ? Oh, go quickly, for I desire so much to be with Him."

When the priest at length came, and as he held the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, St. Alphonsus, full of heavenly joy, exclaimed : " O my Jesus, come, come into my soul, and for ever remain there !" He then received Holy Communion, and for a long time adored in silence that same God Who was to be for ever his happiness in Heaven.

My child, such also should be your words when you are preparing for Communion, for He is also to be your eternal reward in Heaven if you love Him on earth.

ST. PHILIP ON HIS DEATH-BED.

St. Philip Neri had a great love for Jesus in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, and his heart was always burning with the great desire he had of receiving Him into his soul.

When he was stretched on his death-bed, and the priest was bringing him the Holy Eucharist to be his Viaticum, he raised himself up on his bed, notwithstanding his weakness, and cried out with a clear and powerful voice : " O my Love, my Love, my Jesus, my God, come to me !"

A heavenly joy overspread his countenance as he received Him, for he felt that Heaven itself could give him no greater gift than the one he had just received—God Himself ; and he died in the embraces of Him he loved so much.

THE VENERABLE MARY NAVARRO.

One day, when the Venerable Mary Navarro was meditating on the mysteries of the Divine infancy of Our Blessed Lord, the Queen of Angels appeared to her, and put her beloved Son in her arms, in order that she might be able to converse with Him and enjoy His sweet caresses.

While she was thus enjoying a foretaste of the bliss of Paradise, she said lovingly to the Divine Infant: "O my dearest Jesus, how much greater would be my joy if I had Thee in my heart, instead of in my arms; but alas! my heart is so full of sin!"

As soon as she had said these words Jesus entered her heart, and, as it were, transfixed it with His holy love.

When you go to Holy Communion the same Jesus really enters your heart. Have you the same desire of receiving Him as this holy lady had?

LEGEND OF ST. ANTONY OF PADUA.

One night St. Antony was in a house of a friend who had invited him to pass the night under his roof. Before retiring to rest, his host passed near the room where Antony was, and was astonished to see it filled with a bright light. He approached, and looking through a little opening in the door, he saw the Saint standing in the midst of a dazzling brightness, and in his arms he beheld the Divine Child Jesus, Who was treating him with loving familiarity, and on Whom the Saint was gazing in raptures of love.

My child, you will no doubt say, when reading this

story : " Oh, how happy St. Antony must have been at that moment when he was permitted to carry the Holy Child Jesus in his arms and press Him to his heart !" Yet every time you receive Communion that same Jesus grants you even a greater favour ; He does not only rest upon your arms, but even enters your heart and rests there.

My child, although the remembrance of your sins should make you very humble when you are preparing to go to Communion, it should not keep you back. On the contrary, it should make you be the more anxious to approach, that you may be more and more purified from them. Approach, then, with confidence ; it is Jesus Himself Who calls you to come, and He knows better than you do your unworthiness.

ST. BONAVENTURE'S COMMUNION.

Our Lord was once pleased to show the great St. Bonaventure that He is more pleased with that one who approaches Him frequently in Communion filled with humble confidence than with the one who keeps away through fear.

One day while he was considering the greatness and infinite purity of God, and on the other hand his own great wretchedness and misery, he did not dare to approach the altar, and for several days did not receive Communion. " Oh, how much I desire to be united to Jesus !" he said ; " but I cannot approach to-day, I am so unworthy." God had compassion on him, and rewarded his humility in a most wonderful manner. On the last morning, while assisting at Mass, when the priest at the altar

had broken the Host into three pieces, one of the pieces was miraculously carried to him and placed upon his tongue.

Filled with gratitude, and at the same time penetrated with love, he thanked his beloved Lord from his inmost heart. God at the same time made him clearly understand that He is more pleased with those who approach Him with heartfelt love than with those who stay away through fear, and thus keep themselves from the loving embrace of Him Whose delight is to be with the children of men.

ST. FRANCES DRIVES SATAN AWAY.

One day St. Frances of Rome was going to Holy Communion, when the Devil, envious of her happiness, said to her: "How can you, who are so full of venial sins, dare to receive the Immaculate Lamb?"

She instantly perceived that the enemy intended to deprive her of this great blessing, and she drove him away by spitting in his face. After this the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, and said: "My child, you have done well; your defects, instead of being an obstacle to your going to Communion, should, on the contrary, induce you to go more and more frequently, since in Holy Communion you find the remedy for all your miseries."

ST. MECHTILDIS'S PREPARATION.

Sometimes you may not feel so devout in going to Communion as you would wish to be. Do not be alarmed at this, but have in your heart a great desire to love God, and this will make up for that

deficiency. This is what Our Lord Himself told St. Mechtildis.

One day He said to her : " When you are about to receive Me in Holy Communion, desire, for the glory of My Name, to have all the fervour and all the zeal that the most loving heart ever had for Me, and with this preparation approach to Me with confidence, for I will consider that I see in you all that fervour that you so earnestly desire to possess, and will treat you accordingly."

So, my dear child, when you are going up to the altar of God, go with all the fervour in your power, and try to love God with your whole heart, uniting your desires with those of all the Saints in Heaven, and Our Divine Lord will enter lovingly into your soul, and the more frequently you approach, the greater will be the joy of His Sacred Heart.

BLESSED LUCY AND THE CHILD JESUS.

Blessed Lucy lived in the fifteenth century at Narni, in Italy. When she was only five years of age she used to go alone to the church to say her prayers. There was on one of the altars of the church a beautiful marble statue of the Most Holy Mother of God, with the Child Jesus in her arms. It was before this image that the child used to kneel. So great was her love for Jesus and His Holy Mother that she could not take her eyes off those of the image before her, and she would in her simple way speak to the statue as if it were alive and could hear her.

One day as she was thus kneeling saying her Rosary, she said to the Blessed Virgin : " My sweet

Mother, would you be so good as to put your little Child Jesus into my arms, for I love Him so much, and I want to caress Him."

Our Lady was pleased to hear her prayer, and, coming down from the altar, she placed the Child in the little girl's arms. It was no longer a marble image that she held, but a living Child.

Lucy was overwhelmed with joy as she pressed Jesus to her heart, and showed Him every sign of the love which burned within her for Him ; and now possessing Him Whom she loved, she wanted to keep Him always. So she took Him home, and, as her life tells us, He remained with her three days.

This was a great favour conferred on the Blessed Lucy. But a greater favour still is granted to you every time you go to Holy Communion. Lucy was not afraid of Jesus ; on the contrary, she was filled with joy as she held Him pressed to her bosom ; and the reason was because she was so innocent and loved Him so much. So you also, my child, if you are innocent, and if you love God, you will have no fear in approaching Him; on the contrary, this will be your greatest desire.

But you may say : " If I were only innocent like Lucy, I would not be afraid ; but I am so unworthy, because I have offended Him so much." My child, that should be an additional reason for approaching Him with confidence ; for since Jesus has done so much to free you from the terrible death that awaited you in eternity, you can easily see that His love for you must be great, and consequently that you need not be afraid of Him.

JESUS SAID, " COME."

When the holy Curé of Ars was instructing his people on the great mystery of the love of God, he said : " Go, then, to Communion, my children ; go to Jesus with confidence and love. Has not the Divine Saviour said : ' Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you '? Can you resist an invitation so full of love and tenderness ? Do not say : ' I am not worthy.' It is true you are not worthy of it, but you need God. If Our Lord had regard to our worthiness, He would never have instituted His beautiful Sacrament of love, for no one in the world is worthy of it : neither the Saints nor the angels in Heaven, nor the archangels, nor even the Blessed Virgin ; but He had in view our needs, and we all are in need of it. Do not say that you are sinners, that you are too miserable, and for that reason you do not dare to approach. I would as soon hear you say that you were very ill, and, therefore, that you will not take any remedy, nor send for the physician."

My dear child, these words and the example of all the Saints, and the loving words of Jesus Himself, should take away from us all fear when we are preparing for Holy Communion, and should make us cast ourselves into the arms of Jesus without reserve. Jesus has lovingly said : " Him who cometh to Me, I will in no way cast out." Say, then, to Him : " In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust."

V. Acts during Communion.

When you are kneeling at the altar, and Jesus is on the point of taking up His dwelling-place in your soul, one great act should take entire possession of your heart—an Act of the Love of God.

My child, the happy moment has come ; Jesus is with you, and you are with Him ! Say, then, to Him, with all the love and fervour of your soul : " O my Jesus, my God, my love ! Thou hast now come into my heart. Oh, remain there for ever, and never let me be separated from Thee. May I love Thee in time in Thy Holy Sacrament, and for ever in Heaven in Thy own kingdom.

THE THOUGHT OF THE LOVE OF JESUS.

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi once asked a person after Communion of what she had been thinking when Jesus was dwelling within her.

" I was thinking of the love of Jesus for me," she replied.

" Yes," answered the Saint ; " when we think of the immense love with which Jesus loves us, we cannot think of anything else."

BLESSED MARGARET OF YPRES.

Jesus Christ one day said to the Blessed Margaret of Ypres, when she had just received Him in Communion : " See, my child, the beautiful union that now exists between us. Let us always thus love each other, and let us never be separated from one another."

These are also the words which Jesus says in the heart of every child on the day of Holy Communion. Oh, how beautiful it is to be thus united to Our Divine Lord, and to be so much loved by Him!

ST. PHILIP'S LOVE FOR JESUS.

St. Philip Neri was inflamed with the love of God. "How is it possible," he would often say, "how is it possible that anyone who believes in God, and knows what the love of Jesus has done for him, can ever love anything else but God?"

If at times he felt this love for Jesus less ardent than it usually was, he would complain to God in this manner: "O my God, Thou art so amiable, and Thou hast commanded me to love Thee. But why hast Thou given me only one heart to do this, and that heart, too, so very little?"

We also read in his life that he often received from God in return so many spiritual consolations that, unable any longer to endure so great a fire of love, he was forced to cry out: "No more, O Lord, no more." I know, my child, that you love God, but, ah! how little is your love for Him when compared to that of St. Philip. Beg of Jesus, then, to give you the great grace of loving Him daily more and more.

"I WANT TO SPEAK TO JESUS."

When St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi was a little girl, and saw her older companions going up to the altar to receive Communion, she asked her mother if she also might go up with them.

" You are too young yet, my child," she answered; " you must wait till you are a little older."

This brought tears to her eyes, for she loved Jesus so much and desired so much to be with Him.

A FAVOURED CHILD OF JESUS.

There lived in Spain a very holy woman, whose name was Jane Rodriguez, who from her infancy received from Jesus many miraculous marks of love, for our encouragement and instruction.

One day, when Jane was only seven years old, and while she was praying with great devotion before a picture of the Holy Child Jesus, a dazzling brightness filled the room, and the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, holding the Divine Child in her arms. Jane bowed down in profound adoration, and contemplated with admiration the beauty of Mary and the majesty of Jesus.

Our Lady said to her: " My daughter, what do you think of my little Child Jesus? Do you not think that everyone ought to love Him? Would you yourself not like to have Him for your own dearest friend?"

" Yes, my Lady," answered Jane; " that is my one only desire."

As soon as she said these words, Jesus stretched out His little hands as if to embrace her, and Mary pressed her to her heart. Jesus then gave her His blessing, and the vision disappeared from her sight, leaving her soul filled with a happiness which it would be vain to attempt to describe.

My child, when Jesus comes to you in Holy Communion, He not only stretches out His arms to em-

brace you, but He goes into your soul and dwells there. And all He desires in return is that you love Him with all your heart.

Jesus is not satisfied with words only. He wishes you to prove by your actions that you really love Him. He says in His Holy Gospel : " If you love Me, keep My commandments."

VI. Acts after Communion.

How sad it is to see so many people forget so soon the infinite blessing they have been the objects of by receiving Jesus into their souls ; they scarcely even thank Him for it. But you will be very different from them : you will not only thank Him for His goodness in coming into your soul, but you will also make the offering to Him of your whole being since He has given Himself entirely to you. Say to Him, then, with all the sincerity of your soul : " O Jesus, receive my poor offering. Thou hast given Thyself to me ; now let me give myself to Thee. I give Thee my body, that it may be chaste and pure. I give Thee my soul, that it may be free from sin. I give Thee my heart, that it may always love Thee. I give Thee every breath that I shall breathe, and especially my last. I give Thee myself in life and in death, that I may be Thine for ever and ever."

HUMBERT'S STORY.

Humbert, a member of the Order of St. Dominic, relates that a certain religious, who was dead, appeared to one of the brethren of the same Order in the midst of great glory. He led him forth from

his cell, and showed him in a vision a great multitude of men clothed in white garments, and surrounded with dazzling brightness. They all carried crosses on their shoulders, and were walking towards Heaven. Their crosses were very beautiful, but seemed heavy, and they found it difficult to carry them.

Then he showed him a second procession, in which walked men also clad in white, but much more glorious than the first. They also carried crosses, but these were still more beautiful and rich, and they carried them in their hands without appearing to be fatigued.

Finally, there came a third procession, but it was incomparably more beautiful than the other two. All the crosses were brilliant like the noonday sun, and instead of these men carrying them on their shoulders, or in their hands, each one of them had by his side an angel who carried his cross for him, so that they were all able to walk with the utmost freedom and joy.

The religious asked his companion what was meant by these three processions. He answered: "All the men whom you have seen are true Christians, who are working out their salvation by following Jesus crucified. Those whom you saw bearing their crosses on their shoulders, and walking with some difficulty, represent those who have given themselves to God in an advanced age. The second procession represents those who took up the yoke of Jesus Christ in their youth; but the last, who walked so joyfully and so easily, are those who from their earliest childhood have consecrated themselves

to God by the practice of good works, and by renouncing all the vanities of the world.

So, my child, from the day of your First Communion, consecrate yourself, soul and body, to Jesus, that you may be able to carry your cross more easily.

THE OLD AND FADED PICTURE.

An old soldier who had passed through many battles, and had received many medals and marks of distinction on account of his many acts of bravery, caused them all to be hung up in his little room, that people might see them.

In the midst of these things there was a little picture, soiled, torn, and so old, that it was almost impossible to discover what it was. It occupied the place of honour.

A friend who came to visit him examined one by one these medals and the other things that were on the wall, and when he came to the picture, he said: "What is this that you have placed in the centre of all these glorious remembrances of the past? It seems so old and faded that it cannot be of any value."

"That!" answered the old man, "that is the most precious and most glorious of them all. It is the picture I received on my First Communion day, and is the sign of the promises I then made to God. It is old and faded, because I have carried it with me wherever I went. It was with me in the camp, in my home, and even on the battlefield; and when I was in trouble or in danger I used to raise my eyes to it, and to think of that happy day, the happiest

of my life, when God came to me for the first time, and when I gave myself heart and soul to Him. Then all sorrow vanished, and I received new courage and new strength to fight the battle of life. I am an old man now, and must soon die, but when that hour comes, that same picture shall again give me courage in my last moments, and be the means of obtaining for me the greatest of all graces, perseverance."

Happy old man! O my child, do as this good man did. May your life be like his, and your death also will be happy.

ST. MARGARET IN PRISON.

When St. Margaret, virgin and martyr, was in prison, having already suffered many cruel tortures for the Faith, she fervently besought Our Lord that He would be pleased to give her the grace of persevering to the end. While she was thus praying she was seized with a trembling from head to foot, for the Devil appeared to her under the form of a terrible dragon which rushed towards her as if about to devour her.

But the Saint, who had from her childhood given herself to God, strong in her confidence that He would never forsake her, made upon herself the sign of the Cross, and asked Him to help her.

At the same instant the Devil fled in dismay, and the prison was filled with a bright light, and there came a voice out of the brightness which said to her distinctly: "O Margaret, servant of God, be full of joy, since you have overcome your enemies. The tyrant is filled with confusion, and the Devil is van-

quished. Do not lose confidence in what you have yet to endure for the love of God, for your torments will soon come to an end, and your everlasting glory will soon begin."

The Saint was consoled by these words, and thanked her heavenly master for His infinite goodness to her. The next day she was brought forth to martyrdom, and thus entered gloriously into Heaven.

VII. Holy Communion is the Pledge of Eternal Life.

My child, every time you go worthily to Holy Communion you receive from God a new pledge of eternal happiness for the life to come, for Jesus Christ says : " He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him ; and I will raise him up at the last day." This should excite in you a desire of going often to this heavenly banquet, that you may make your salvation more and more secure.

THE DEATH OF ONE WHO LOVED GOD.

Pope Gregory the Great tells us the following beautiful story : " My father," he writes, " had three sisters, all of whom were filled with the desire of leading a perfect life. On the same day they all consecrated themselves to God, by taking the veil of holy religion. Of the three, Tharsilla was the most remarkable for her great love of prayer, her mortifications, and her continual conversation with God.

"One night my grand-uncle, Pope Felix, appeared to her, and showed her the beauties of the Kingdom of Heaven, saying: 'My daughter, the hour has now come when I am about to conduct you into the abode of eternal glory.'

"Not long after this Tharsilla was seized by a sudden illness, and she knew at the same time that she was about to die.

"According to custom there assembled in her house a number of people who came to assist her on her death-bed, and to console and comfort the surviving friends. My mother was amongst them, and sat near the bed of the dying Saint.

"Suddenly my mother saw her raise up her eyes towards Heaven, as if she saw something very beautiful. Then, turning to those around her, she cried out: 'Give place; go away, Jesus is coming!'

"Saying these words, her holy soul left her body. At the same instant a heavenly perfume filled the room, as if God Himself, the Author of all sweetness, had been pleased to leave behind Him this mark of His holy presence."

THE ANGELS AND THE FLOWERS.

While Blessed Robert was Abbot of Clairvaux, there lived in that house a brother called Guicard. He had spent his days in piety and in loving God, and now the time had come when God was to take him to Himself to reward him in Heaven.

On the night of his death the Abbot had as usual retired to rest, but while he lay asleep he had a vision. Two young men of the most beautiful aspect, whose countenances and raiment shone with

dazzling light, entered the church of the monastery and began to strew the pavement with lilies, roses, violets, and other flowers of great beauty and sweet fragrance, so that the whole floor was made very beautiful by their varied colours, and the church filled with the odour of their perfume.

The Abbot, seeing them doing this, said to them : " My good young men, why is it that, contrary to our custom, you have thought fit to strew the pavement with these flowers, and thus to introduce a novelty into our monastery ?"

They answered : " Do not wonder at what you see us doing, and do not hinder us in the execution of the work we have been sent to do, because there is to be celebrated here, in this church, a new festival of a certain Saint, on account of whom the angels in Heaven rejoice and a hymn is sung to the Lord in Zion."

And as they were saying these words the solemn sound of the bell announced to him that one of the brethren was at the point of death. So he arose from his couch and found that Brother Guicard was dying. With great devotion he made the recommendation of his soul, and when he was dead he related to the rest of the brethren the vision he had seen that night. They were filled with great joy at these tidings, for they knew that it was for him the angels had been preparing the church, and that the soul of their departed brother was already in the possession of eternal bliss.

Such also is the happy end of all those who, during life, love God. The Body and Blood of Jesus Christ preserves them from death ; and when

the time of their exile is ended the angels come down from Heaven to lead their new companions to the joys they themselves possess.

My child, how sweet it is to die when one has loved God, and has preserved the life of his soul by partaking of that life-giving food, the Holy Eucharist. This has been the experience of all the Saints ; may it one day be yours also !

ST. TERESA'S VIATICUM.

While St. Teresa was lying on her bed of death she asked to receive Holy Communion for the last time. When the priest came into the room carrying the Blessed Sacrament she raised herself in her bed as if to welcome Jesus Whom he brought with him. " O my Lord and my beloved Spouse," she exclaimed, " at last has come the hour I have waited for so long, the hour when I shall go to Thee in Heaven !"

Soon after this, having received Jesus in Holy Viaticum, she expired, and went to see face to face that Jesus Whom she had always so tenderly loved.

THE JOY OF A MOTHER AT THE HAPPY DEATH OF HER CHILD.

Mgr. de Segur relates to us the following story :

" A pious and excellent lady had a daughter who was in every way worthy of her ; but from her early years she had been afflicted with a disease which nothing could cure. At twenty years of age she was still confined to bed, from which she had not been able to rise for nearly ten years.

" Although her sufferings were very great, she

never complained ; always sweet, gentle, and pleasant with everyone, and grateful for every little attention paid to her, she was beloved by all, and was for everyone a subject of edification.

" Her mother, as can easily be imagined, had a special affection for her.

" During all these long years the young woman received Holy Communion as far as possible every week. On the day on which she died, God granted her that favour, although there were no signs at the time that death was so near.

" ' My Sister,' said she during the day to a religious who was visiting her, ' would you be so kind as to give me a drink ?'

" The good Sister at once complied ; and when she had taken a little she returned the cup with a sweet smile upon her lips, and said to her : ' Thanks, Sister. Oh, how good you are !'

" These were her last words. Bowing her head gently on her breast, she breathed her last.

" Her mother was sitting at the bedside, and as soon as she saw that everything was over, she sent in haste for me," continues the prelate. " I immediately returned with the messenger, and, kneeling in the midst of the weeping group, I prayed for the repose of the soul of the beloved child.

" ' You must be very grieved at thus losing your child,' I said.

" ' Grieved !' she gently answered. ' Oh no. How could I be sorrowful ? I feel acutely her loss, but I am at the same time happy, because I know that my beloved child is with God.' "

Les Viellées des Adorateurs du S.S., 292.

XLII

THE HOLY EUCHARIST—FREQUENT COMMUNION AND FIRST COMMUNION

I. I GO FREQUENTLY TO COMMUNION BECAUSE I LOVE GOD.

THERE is nothing, my child, that the Church desires to impress upon us so much as going frequently to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. This she has always done from the beginning, and at the present day she is insisting on it more and more, because Satan, who hates to see us approaching often to the altar, has raised up men who, under the pretence of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament and of our own unworthiness to receive it, endeavour to keep us back from God.

But pay no attention to their words, and resolve as long as you live to go frequently, and even daily, if you can, to Holy Communion, that you may increase daily more and more in the love of God, and procure for yourself more abundant graces to enable you to secure more confidently the Kingdom of Heaven.

The love you have for God is the first reason why you should go frequently to Communion, for how can anyone be said to love another if he seldom or

never goes to see him. If you really love God, the greatest desire of your soul shall be to approach to Him as often as you can.

JESUS DESIRES TO BE WITH US.

One day Jesus appeared to a nun of the Order of St. Clare to exhort her to go frequently to Communion. "If thou wilt receive Me often in Holy Communion," said He, "I will forget all thy ingratitude towards Me."

BEAUTIFUL WORDS OF ST. MECHTILDES.

St. Mechtildes used to say: "If Christians only knew the immense treasure they possessed in the Holy Eucharist, and all they could obtain by going to Holy Communion, their joy would be so great that earth would be changed for them into Heaven itself; they would go in crowds to the Holy Table every day, and with hearts overflowing with love."

JESUS' GREAT COMPLAINT.

Jesus one day complained to St. Gertrude of those who tried to keep others away from frequent Communion. He said to her these words: "As My greatest delight is to be with the children of men, for whose sake I dwell in the Most Holy Sacrament, those who keep back others from coming to receive Me, are the enemies of My happiness."

So, my child go often to Communion, and do not follow the advice of those who try to keep you back, no matter who they may be; Jesus Christ says they are His enemies: "the enemies of My happiness."

SATAN'S VICTORY.

"I knew a holy man who lived in the desert," writes the Abbot Cassian, "whose soul was as pure as an angel of Heaven. He had obtained this grace by a continual watching over his senses, and by his great humility. His soul was clear like a beautiful mirror; not a breath or the least cloud ever stained its brightness in the eyes of God. And his greatest happiness was to receive Holy Communion every Saturday and Sunday.

"But the angel of darkness was filled with anger when he saw the fervour and holiness of this religious, and he vowed to ruin him. He knew that he would try this in vain as long as he went frequently to Communion, so he began by tempting him to keep away from Jesus Christ. He put into his mind thoughts of his unworthiness, and the great holiness and infinite purity of God. The holy man, at length yielding to these temptations, went less frequently to Communion.

"But he was not happy. The longer he kept away the more sad and discouraged he became, until in the end he lost that peace of soul which is the joy of God's children.

"He would no doubt have fallen into despair had God not inspired him to go to his Superior and make known to him his troubles.

"'Ah, my child,' said his Superior, 'this is a temptation of the enemy of your soul. He wants to ruin you, and he cannot do so as long as you are united with Jesus Christ by frequent Communion; so he is tempting you to keep away from Him that

he may bring about more easily your destruction. Despise, therefore, these thoughts which he puts into your mind, and go to Holy Communion as often as you were accustomed to do.'

" The religious obeyed, and as a reward for his obedience God restored to him the peace he had lost, and on the days he went to Communion he seemed to have a foretaste of the joys of Paradise."

" I SHOULD SOON DIE."

Not long ago there lived in Rome a pious girl called Julia. She was accustomed to pass many hours every day at the foot of the altar, praying with a fervour which edified all who saw her. She also went very frequently to Holy Communion, as all those do who really love Our Lord.

One day a friend said to her : " What would you do, Julia, if your confessor told you to abstain from Holy Communion for a week ?"

" I would obey him," she replied ; " but oh, how could I bear so great a privation !"

" But if he told you to pass a whole month without receiving Communion, what would you do ?"

" I would still obey him," she answered, trembling at the very thought of such a misfortune, " but I should soon die ; I could not live so long without Him Whom I love with all the ardour of my soul."

BLESSED CONRAD'S MISTAKE.

Blessed Conrad, who lived in the fourteenth century, loved Our Lord with all his heart. Nothing gave him so much delight as to receive Him in Communion. But when he considered his own un-

worthiness and God's greatness, he sometimes abstained from Communion through reverence. Yet on these occasions he did not feel happy; something whispered to him that he had done wrong.

One day he told his confessor that he sometimes abstained from Communion, and that on these days he was not happy.

"Oh, you have done very wrong, my child," he said; "God is on the altar waiting for you; why do you not go to Him, since He is calling you? Go as often as you can, and do not make His Sacred Heart sad by keeping Him waiting for you so long."

This is also my advice to you, my child, You love Jesus, and Jesus loves you; go often to Him, then, that you may fulfil the desire of His Sacred Heart.

II. I go frequently to Communion, because there are so Many Dangers in the Way.

My child, it is impossible for you to number the dangers that surround you on the path to Heaven; for Satan, who goes about trying to ruin souls, endeavours at every moment to destroy you. But by frequently going to Communion you are easily able to escape all these dangers.

THE FATHER OF ST. GREGORY CURED.

It is related in the life of St. Gregory of Tours that when he was a little child his father became very ill. Gregory, who loved his father as only a good son can do, asked God by many fervent prayers to heal him.

One night, as he was asleep, his angel guardian appeared to him, and said : " If you want to heal your father, do what I now tell you. When you rise in the morning, write on a piece of wood the holy Name of Jesus, and place it, without telling anyone, under your father's pillow."

As soon as he awoke, he got a piece of wood and wrote on it the holy Name of Jesus, as the angel had asked him to do, and placed it gently under his father's pillow. Scarcely had this been done when his father found himself suddenly freed from all his sickness. Gregory, seeing this, fell on his knees and thanked God and his good angel guardian for making his father well again.

If the Name of Jesus written on a piece of wood was so powerful, how much more powerful will Jesus Himself be when He really dwells in your soul by Holy Communion !

THE NOBLEMAN REFORMED.

St. Alphonsus relates that a nobleman was so accustomed to fall into sins against the angelic virtue of purity, that he despaired of overcoming his bad habit, although he tried often to conquer it.

" My father," he said one day to his confessor after one of his sad relapses, " do you think that I shall ever overcome this terrible temptation ?"

" Yes, my son," replied the priest ; " go to Communion every day, and you will soon be cured."

The man did so for several weeks, and was entirely delivered from the vice to which he had been a slave so long, and never after committed a sin against that holy virtue.

JESUS CHRIST'S WORDS TO THE LOST CHRISTIAN.

St. Francis of Sales, speaking of those poor Christians who are lost for all eternity, and who in life had neglected to go frequently to the Sacraments, says: "Those Christians who are lost shall have nothing to answer to their Judge at the Day of Judgment, when He shall show them that it was through their own fault that they died in sin, since it was so easy for them to have kept their souls alive by frequently partaking of His sacred Body and Blood. 'O miserable wretches,' will He say to them, 'why did you allow your souls to die by mortal sin, since it was so easy for you to keep them alive by feeding them frequently with My Body and Blood, which I left you expressly for that purpose?'"

O my child, may it never be your fate to hear these terrible words! Go often and fervently to Communion, and on that day Jesus will take you to His heavenly home.

THE BRAVE OFFICER.

Not many years ago, during the Crimean War, a French officer, who was a man of great piety, received an order to attack one of the enemy's strongholds. In an instant he was at his post at the head of his men, and rushed forward to the attack. The onset was terrible, but in the midst of the glittering bayonets and the showers of bullets, the officer was as calm as if he were on parade or at a review. His bravery gained the day, and the fort was captured.

His General, who had witnessed the scene from a

distance, went to meet him. "O Colonel," he cried out, "what bravery! Where did you learn to be so calm and so self-possessed in the midst of such imminent danger?"

"My General," he answered, with sublime simplicity, "I received Holy Communion this morning."

All who heard this answer were filled with admiration at so much courage and piety.

It is Holy Communion that gains for us also strength to overcome our spiritual enemies.

PREPARED TO DIE.

King Henry IV. of France went very often to the Sacraments, to the edification of all his people, and was thus always ready to die. "You know," he used to say, "I cannot foresee what is about to happen to me, and I want always to be ready."

It was well for him that he thus always kept himself ready, for one day he was suddenly attacked by an assassin and killed on the spot.

St. Francis of Sales spoke of his sudden death as follows: "The greatest happiness of this good King was in being a dutiful son of the Catholic Church, and it is this thought which now gives me so much consolation. His end was indeed sudden, but then, he was always prepared by his strict attention to his religious duties; and I feel confident, that God our Heavenly Father has given him full remission of his sins and has taken him from his temporal kingdom here to an eternal one in Heaven."

If you, my child, like that good King, keep united to Jesus by frequently approaching to Holy Communion, you shall also like him be always ready to die.

III. I GO FREQUENTLY TO COMMUNION, BECAUSE I NEED GRACE FROM GOD.

My child, the Catechism tells you that without the grace of God you cannot do any good for your salvation, and that the greatest means of obtaining this grace is by going to the Sacraments. God has laid upon you many duties to be performed every day; the surest way of performing them so as to please Him is to go frequently to Communion, for there you will receive Himself to guide and strengthen you.

THE COURAGEOUS NUNS.

A certain gentleman went to visit a hospital which was under the care of the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul. During the time of his visit, an operation had to be performed on one of the patients, which caused her intense pain, and her cries of anguish resounded throughout the house, rending the hearts of all who heard them.

The gentleman could not endure them, and instantly left the ward. The Sisters alone remained calm and firm at the side of the poor woman.

"How can these good Sisters stand there so courageously," he asked of the Superioress, "when even I, who have strong nerves, cannot endure it any longer?"

"Sir," she replied, pointing to the door of the tabernacle in their little chapel, "it is there where they get that courage and strength you so much admire. It is Jesus Himself Who gives it to them in the Holy Eucharist."

ST. LIDVINA CONSOLED.

In the life of St. Lidvina we read, that in the beginning of her sickness she shrank from suffering. By a particular disposition of Divine Providence, however, a celebrated servant of God, John Por, went to see her, and perceiving that she was not quite resigned to the will of God, he exhorted her to meditate frequently on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, that by the remembrance of His passion she might be able to suffer more willingly. She promised to do so, and fulfilled her promise ; but she did not find any relief for her soul. After a while her director returned, and asked her how she had succeeded in meditating on the Passion of Our Lord, and what profit she had derived from it.

" O my Father," she replied, " your counsel was very good indeed, but the greatness of my suffering does not allow me to find any consolation in meditating on my Saviour's sorrows."

Seeing that this means was of little or no use to her, he tried another. He gave her Holy Communion, and afterwards whispered into her ear : " Till now I have exhorted you to the continual remembrance of Our Lord's sufferings as a remedy for your pains ; now let Jesus Himself exhort you."

Behold, no sooner had she received the Sacred Host than she felt so great a love for Jesus, and so great a desire to become like unto Him in His sufferings, that she broke into sobs and sighs, and for two weeks was scarcely able to stop her tears. From that moment the pains and sufferings of her Saviour remained so deeply impressed on her mind that she

thought of them continually, and was thus enabled to suffer patiently for Him, Who for love of her had endured so many and such great torments.

Such was the consolation and strength this servant of God obtained by her union with Jesus in Holy Communion ; in like manner also all those who have recourse to Jesus in Holy Communion obtain consolation in all their pains, and strength to bear them patiently.

Moreover, besides the actual grace God gives us when we go to Communion, we receive, every time we approach the Holy Table worthily, a new degree of sanctifying grace.

ST. TERESA'S WORDS TO ONE OF HER NUNS.

St. Teresa appeared after her death to one of her Sisters in religion and said to her : " My dear Sister, know this, that all the Saints in Heaven, without exception, would be willing to come back to this world and to remain here till the end of time, suffering all the miseries to which this mortal life is subject, only to gain one more degree of sanctifying grace and the eternal glory corresponding thereto."

If you want another proof of the value of sanctifying grace, remember that Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of the Father, came down upon earth, was made man, suffered and died the death of the Cross in order to purchase grace for us. Now, this sanctifying grace is poured upon you, my child, in profusion every time you approach worthily to Communion. Oh then, go as often as you can, that you may receive it more abundantly.

IV. I go frequently to Communion, because Jesus wants Me to go.

My child, when Jesus Christ sat down in the midst of His disciples at the Last Supper, He said to them : " With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you." Oh, how He longed for that moment to come that He might institute this most blessed Sacrament, that He might abide in us and we in Him, to be the food of our souls !

And has not our most holy Father Pius X., now happily reigning, declared, with no uncertain sound, that all the faithful should endeavour to receive their Divine Lord *every day* in the Sacrament of His love, that they may the more perfectly correspond with the intense desire He has of being united to them, His children on earth, whom He loves so much, and to each of whom he affectionately says : " My delight is to be with the children of men. Oh, with what desire do I desire to eat this Pasch with you !"

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT FEAST.

Jesus Christ condemns in a way which cannot be misunderstood, the vain excuses that people make so frequently for keeping back from Communion.

" A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse.

" The first said to him : ' I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it ; I pray thee, hold me excused.' And another said : ' I have bought

five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them ; I pray thee hold me excused.' And another said : ' I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

" And the servant returning told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant : ' Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the blind and the lame.'

" And the servant said : ' Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.'

" And the lord said to the servant : ' Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you, that none of those men who were invited shall taste of my supper.' "

So also many Christians, when they are invited to receive Holy Communion, keep away, and for excuses exactly similar : their worldly possessions and pleasures are preferred to the invitation of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven. And since they preferred the world to God, and did not accept the heavenly graces He offered them, He, at the end of their lives, will cast them away from Him into Hell for all eternity. O my child, obey with a loving heart God's invitation, and go frequently to and sit down at His banquet on earth, that you may be one day called to sit down at that eternal one which He has prepared in Heaven for those who love Him.

OUR SAVIOUR'S COMPARISON.

One day as St. Gertrude was meditating on the love which made the King of Heaven find His delight in the society of the children of men, our

Saviour illustrated what seemed to her so incomprehensible a love by the following comparison :

The son of a King is surely much greater and nobler than the children of the poor man who run about the street ; he has in his father's palace everything that can delight and gratify him, yet, if you give him the choice either to go out and play with the children in the street or stay at home amid the splendours of his father's Court, he will certainly prefer to go and play with them.

" Thus I, too," said Our Lord, " find a pleasure in being with you ; and, having instituted the Blessed Sacrament for this end, anyone, therefore, who prevents a soul from receiving Me deprives Me of a great pleasure."

THE FERVENT RELIGIOUS.

In the writings of Cassien we read : " I knew long ago a religious who dwelt in the desert, and who was gifted with an angelic chastity. He had obtained from God on every occasion a victory over his passions, and was remarkable for his profound humility.

" As a brightly polished mirror, that soul was always pure and radiant ; never did even the breath of sin tarnish its spotless brilliancy. What was it that made him shine so brightly ? It was because he went often to Communion. It was the reward Jesus gave him according to His promise : ' He that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me.' "

THE ABBESS PUNISHED.

The convent in which St. Lutgarde dwelt was ruled by an Abbess who did not approve of the nuns

going often to Communion. Now the Saint had had the custom of going frequently to Communion, and the Abbess seeing this forbade her to go so often. The Saint answered: "I will obey you very cheerfully, but I foresee most surely a great chastisement which Jesus Christ will send you because this command is so displeasing to Him."

The Abbess made no account of this warning, but continued the prohibition. A short time afterwards she was suddenly seized with acute pains in her members, which continued to increase every moment without ceasing, until, being made wise by suffering, she withdrew her prohibition, and left the servant of God free access to her beloved Spouse in the Blessed Sacrament.

Thus did God manifest His displeasure at those who keep others from going often to Communion, and His great love for St. Lutgarde because of her great desire to receive Him.

THE BEES AND THE FLOWERS.

One day Our Lord, when speaking to His great servant St. Mechtildes, said to her: "Look at the bees, and see with what eagerness they seek the honey flowers; yet My desire to come to you in Holy Communion is far greater."

HEAVENLY REWARDS.

Our Lord once declared to St. Margaret of Cortona that He would reward her confessor, and that richly too, for having advised her to receive Holy Communion frequently.

We read in the life of Father Antonio Torres that shortly after his death he appeared in great splendour to a certain person, and revealed to him that God had increased his glory in Heaven in a special and marvellous manner for having exhorted his penitents to go frequently to Communion.

What more, then, could be said, my child, to show how much Jesus desires us to go frequently to Communion ?

V. I go frequently to Communion, because I want to Persevere to the End

My child, Jesus Christ has given Himself to us in Holy Communion that we may have more abundant graces to reach Heaven. The more frequently, therefore, you make use of this great means of grace the more easily will you persevere in the service of God, and the greater will be the strength you will have to overcome temptations.

SATAN'S ANSWER TO A DYING PRIEST.

Cesarius relates that a certain priest who had led a blameless life, being on his death-bed, saw Satan standing in a corner of the room. At first he was alarmed ; but, remembering how carefully he had endeavoured to serve God all his lifetime, he took courage to address the Evil One in the words of St. Martin : " What art thou doing here, thou cruel beast ?"

He then, by virtue of his priestly power, commanded the evil spirit to declare what it was that chiefly kept souls from falling into his hands.

The Devil remained silent.

The priest ordered him in the Name of God to answer him, and to speak the truth.

The Evil One then made this reply: "There is nothing in the Church that does us so much harm, and keeps so many souls out of our power, as frequent Confession and Communion."

So, my child, go frequently to Confession and Holy Communion, and you will very easily keep in the grace of God, and obtain the grace of perseverance.

AN ARTIST'S CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

There was a certain distinguished artist who, in his youth, had led a life of dissipation, but had returned to the service of God.

To atone for his past sinful life, he took the resolution to go to Communion every Sunday, and he never willingly broke this resolution.

One day he said to the Bishop, with great simplicity and confidence: "For my part, I do not fear death. I go often to Communion, and with the best dispositions in my power. I try to be always ready and always on my guard. When death comes to knock at my door, I will not be taken unprepared."

THE PRIEST'S MOTHER.

Not long ago an excellent mother of a family was found dead one morning in her bed.

Her son, who was a priest, was very much grieved when he learned that she whom he loved so much was dead. But knowing that for a long time past

she had the habit of going very frequently to Communion, and that on the previous day she had received her Divine Lord in Communion, he had no fear about her salvation ; for Our Lord Himself has declared : " He that eateth this bread shall live for ever."

HOW A YOUNG SOLDIER PERSEVERED.

A brave young soldier was once asked : " How is it that you are able to keep good, since almost all those in whose company you are bound to live fall so frequently into sin ?"

He answered with great simplicity : " I am made of the same material as they, but I go to Confession and Communion every Sunday. I have never wilfully failed on that point. I am sure if others did that, they too would keep from falling into sin as well as I."

THE SCHOOLBOY'S DEATH.

There lived in Paris a few years ago a little boy who was attending school. From the day of his First Communion he went to the Sacraments almost every week, and led such a virtuous life that everyone was edified with his youthful piety.

One day he became very ill. A fever seized him, which, in a few hours, made him insensible, and carried him off at the end of two days. His parents wept much over his remains, but there was joy in their hearts in the midst of their affliction. They felt sure that their child was in Heaven with Jesus, because he had so often and so piously received Him on earth.

THE KEY OF PARADISE.

Monsignor de Segur, in his little book on frequent Communion, writes as follows : " If Almighty God were to appear to you, and were to say : ' Do you wish to go to Heaven, My child ? do you wish to have an assurance of your salvation as far as it is possible to have it on earth ?' you would immediately answer : ' O my Lord, from my inmost heart I do desire it.'

" Well, then, in the Name of that good God Who, for the love of us, remains on earth in the Holy Eucharist, I am going to present you with this key of Paradise. I am going to offer you, in His Name the passport which will certainly admit you into Heaven.

" My child, this key of Paradise is ' Regular Confession and Communion every week.'

" Make, then, the following resolution : ' As far as lies in my power, I will never let a week pass without giving new life to my soul by a good Confession and a good Communion. I lay this resolution at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, praying her to obtain for me the grace never to depart from it.' "

My child let this also be your resolution, and you shall most certainly persevere to the end.

VI. Vain Excuses for not going Frequently to Communion.

My child, the Devil, who, above all other things, hates to see people go frequently to Communion, tries, by every means in his power, to keep them

back. He changes himself, as it were, into an angel of light, and under pretence of great reverence for God raises up in their minds certain reasons which, indeed, at first sight look real, but when examined are found to be vain and empty.

A GREAT DISPUTE.

Two men, Neander and Theophilus, were one day disputing on the subject of approaching frequently to the Sacraments.

"I do not like those who go very often to Communion," said Neander; "many of them seem to me to be full of hypocrisy."

Theophilus replied: "As for me, I have very little confidence in those who do not go to Communion at all, or who do not go frequently."

Philothea, who heard this dispute, said: "I can show you from experience and from history the truth of what Theophilus asserts. The most wicked men who have ever been in the world, the worst-behaved Christians, and the refuse of humanity, all belong to the class of those who go but seldom, or not at all, to Communion; whereas, on the contrary all the Saints of the Catholic Church, and especially those who were the greatest among them, went to Communion as often as it was possible for them to do so, and tried, as far as they could, to encourage this practice among the faithful."

My child, I need not ask you to which of these two classes you desire to belong, for I know you want to be a Saint: do then as the Saints did, and like them go frequently to Communion.

A NOBLE LADY DECEIVED.

St. Vincent of Paul, when speaking on this subject, used to relate the following example : " A noble and pious lady, who had long been in the habit of communicating several times a week, was so unhappy as to take the advice of one who, though a good Christian, endeavoured to keep others from frequent Communion.

" She began by going to Communion only once a week ; after a little time she went only once every second week ; and at length she diminished the number of her Communions to one in the month. The lady went on in this way for eight months, when, wishing to know the state of her soul, she made a careful self-examination ; but, alas ! she found her heart so full of sins and imperfections that she was actually afraid of herself.

" ' O miserable creature that I am,' she cried out, ' how deeply have I fallen ! What a wretched life I am living ! What can be the cause of this sad state—I who used to be so happy ? I see, I see ; it is for no other reason than for my having followed the advice of that person who told me to go less frequently to Communion.'

" Then, giving thanks to God, who had opened her eyes to let her see her mistake, she resumed her former practice ; in a short time she overcame her faults, and became pious and fervent as before."

Sometimes under pretence of fear of irreverence, it is really the vice of sloth that keeps people back from God ; they are weary in His service, and think the time tedious which they spend with Him. Oh,

how different it is with the Saints and those who love God ! they never tire in His presence.

KING PHILIP'S DEVOTION.

One day while the Blessed Sacrament was being carried a great distance to a sick person, Philip II., King of Spain, accompanied it all the way on foot. The priest, observing this, asked him if he were not tired.

" Tired !" he replied. " No : behold my servants wait on me day and night, and never have I heard one of them complain of being tired. Shall I, then, complain of fatigue when I am in company with my Lord and my God, Whom I can never sufficiently serve and honour ?"

Moreover, do not keep away from Communion because you do not feel any devotion ; it is frequently at these times that you receive the greatest graces.

ST. CATHERINE OF BOLOGNA.

Our Lord blessed St. Catherine of Bologna, who had persevered in frequent Communion notwithstanding the dryness of soul and temptations against faith with which she was for a long time tried. One day He said to her : " Those who thus resist the Devil and frequently hear Mass and receive Communion merit more than they would have done if they had communicated with abundance of tears and consolations."

Neither let the number nor the greatness of your daily occupations hinder you from going often to Communion, for you will receive additional strength and grace to perform them.

BLESSED THOMAS MORE'S ANSWER.

When Blessed Thomas More was Chancellor of England some of his friends reproached him for going to Holy Communion so often, considering the great number of his occupations.

He answered them as follows : " Your reasons for wanting me to stay from Communion are exactly the ones that cause me to go so often. My distractions are great, but it is in Communion that I recollect myself. Many times a day have I temptations ; it is by daily Communion I get the strength to overcome them. I have many weighty affairs to manage, and I have need of light and wisdom to manage them ; it is for this very reason that I go every day to consult Jesus about them in Holy Communion."

So, my child, do not allow any such excuses to enter your mind : they are temptations, and you ought to put them away.

VII. First Communion.

My child, the day of your First Communion has at length dawned, and for the first time you are about to approach the altar to receive into your soul your beloved Lord and Master Jesus Christ. You are about to accomplish the greatest and the holiest work that it is possible to imagine ; you are going to eat the bread of angels ; you are to eat the flesh of Jesus Christ, and to drink His blood. Oh, what a solemn moment ! If you could only see what is taking place at that moment at the altar you would imagine that you were already in Paradise.

THE ANGELS AND THE MARTYRS.

When the persecution of Diocletian was at its height, a brave soldier of Jesus Christ, called Julian, was led before the tribunal of the heathen judge along with his wife Basilissa. When the judge saw that he could not make them deny their faith, he condemned them to undergo the most cruel torments, and afterwards to be led through the city, that the people might heap on them all kinds of insults, and might torture them in every way that their hatred for them could invent.

As the martyrs were passing by the school where Celsus, the son of the Governor, was seated at his lessons, hearing the tumult in the street, he, along with his companions, ran to the window to see what was the matter.

"Oh!" cried out the boy, "I see a most wonderful thing."

"What is it that you see?" the others all exclaimed in one voice.

"I see around those two Christians whom they are tormenting so cruelly, a multitude of people clad in white garments; they are speaking to them words of comfort, and are putting beautiful crowns upon their heads. Ah, it must indeed be a good thing to believe in that God who can thus protect His servants, and who honours them in this manner. Oh, how happy I am in having seen this beautiful vision! Their God must also be my God, and I hope that I too may have the happiness of suffering for Him as I see them do to-day."

My child, when you are going up to the altar

to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, there is also around you a white-robed army of angels, although you cannot see them with your bodily eyes. They are whispering into your ears words of consolation and of love, and they are happy in the thought that you are one day, if you persevere to the end, to be their companion in Heaven.

If you desire, my child, to receive from Jesus a loving welcome on the day of your First Communion, there is no surer way of obtaining it than by approaching to Him in the company of Mary, His sweet Mother. Jesus loves His holy Mother, and also those whom she loves. Oh, what a happy Communion you will make, if you love Mary! What graces will she obtain for you on that great day!

BLESSED HERMAN AND THE CHILD JESUS.

Jesus loved the little Herman because of his simplicity and innocence. The little boy used to leave his companions at their amusements, and go to the church, because he knew Jesus was there; and he would speak to Him, and tell Him all his troubles, just as if he saw Him in a visible manner.

One day, Jesus showed Himself to Herman. He was in the arms of Mary His Mother, who was standing in a place far beyond his reach above the altar. As he was looking at them, he heard the sweet voice of Mary; she said to him: "Herman, come up hither to us."

"Oh, how gladly would I go to you," he answered, "but there is no ladder, and I cannot reach you."

Our Lady said: "Try as much as you can, and I will help you." Saying this, she took him by the

hand, and lifted him up to the place where she stood. Then she laid Jesus on the floor beside him, that he might speak to Him and enjoy His holy company.

Oh, how happy was Herman during the whole of that day! He would gladly have remained there for ever; but towards evening, Our Lady told him he must now go home. So, taking him by the hand, she placed him in safety on the floor of the church. Herman received the same favour several times, and each time he seemed to taste the joys of Heaven.

Jesus comes to you in Holy Communion as really as He did to Blessed Herman. Ask Our Heavenly Mother Mary to lead you to His feet, that He may fill your heart also with a similar joy.

ST. ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ AND OUR LADY.

One year, on the 15th of August, the Festival of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven, St. Alphonsus Rodriguez went very early to the church to prepare for Holy Communion. After he had received his Divine Master in His Most Holy Sacrament, and while he was making his thanksgiving with great fervour, he was favoured with a beautiful vision.

He thought that he was kneeling at the foot of Our Lady's throne in Heaven, with his angel guardian and his patron, St. Francis, at his side. Our Lady spoke to him with great affection, and warmly welcomed him. Then, taking his soul, she presented it to the Eternal Father, who received the offering with the greatest delight, coming as it did from the hand of one so beloved by Him.

When the Saint returned to his senses he could

scarcely reach his home ; his limbs seemed to bend under him, so great was his emotion. He could not see, for his eyes were, as it were, dazzled with the beautiful things he had seen in Heaven. Whenever he went to Communion, he always offered himself to God through the hands of Our Lady, for now he knew how much more acceptable was the offering made in this manner ; and Our Blessed Lady procured for him in the end the greatest of all good gifts, that of final perseverance.

ST. OZANNA'S VISION.

One day St. Ozanna had a vision in which she saw the Blessed Virgin presenting Our Lord in the Temple of Jerusalem to His Heavenly Father, and placing Him in the arms of the holy old man Simeon. The Saint looked with a kind of envy at the holy old man, and wished in her heart that the same favour should be granted to her.

To her great delight Our Lady took the child from Simeon's arms and placed Him in hers, so that she also might press Him to her heart.

When you go to receive Jesus in Holy Communion, my child, you can imagine that Mary bestows on you a like favour, by the hands of the priest. Oh, how happy is the one who makes his First Communion in these dispositions !

THE PIOUS MOTHER.

In the annals of the Indian Missions we read : " In the year 1586, a pious Indian woman had the happiness of preparing her daughter for her First

Communion. When the happy day came, she dressed her with the greatest care, and led her piously to the church. When Holy Mass began, the good mother left the church and returned quickly to her house. She went at once to the little room where the child was accustomed to sleep, and made it scrupulously clean ; then she erected a little altar, on which she placed a picture of Our Lord, and His Holy Mother, surrounded with flowers and candles ; she also adorned the room with bouquets of flowers. When this labour of love was finished, she sat waiting with a holy impatience the return of her child.

" As soon as she entered, the happy girl ran to her mother, who with tears of joy running down her cheeks, pressed her to her bosom. When this first burst of joy was over, her mother led her into the room. At the unexpected sight that met her eyes, the child exclaimed : ' O my mother, how beautiful you have made my little room !'

" ' Ah, my darling child !' she said, ' Jesus is now dwelling in your heart ; it is befitting, therefore, that your room should be adorned also, since He is to dwell here along with you. To-day, my child, this little room must be your sanctuary, where you will spend your time in recollection and in prayer with that God Who has come to you for the first time, where He will speak to you and you to Him.' Her mother then left her alone for some time, that nothing might disturb that holy peace which was at that moment within her."

O my child, learn from this example in what manner you ought to spend, not only the day of your First Communion, but every day that you

approach the altar to receive the Most Holy Sacrament.

Happy is that child who dies soon after his First Communion ; his passage to Heaven is easy and sweet. If God leaves you on earth for a time, try to make every Communion as fervent as your first one and when the time comes for you to die your passage to Heaven will also be easy and sweet.

" MAMMA, I AM GOING AWAY."

It was in the year 1841. A little girl of eleven years of age, who had just made her First Communion, became ill and suffered much pain. Till then no one saw in her anything to distinguish her from the other little children of her age ; but under a simple and plain exterior there dwelt a soul entirely consecrated to God.

On the first day of her illness she said to her mother : " Mamma, I am going away."

" You are going away, are you ?" said her mother, thinking that her mind was beginning to wander. " Where are you going, dearest ?"

" I am going to the place where I promised Jesus, on the day of my First Communion, that I would go."

" And where did you promise Him to go ?"

" To Heaven, mamma ; and Jesus said He would come soon and take me there."

When the priest came to give her the Last Sacraments, she said to Jesus : " O my dearest Lord, You are going to fulfil the promise You made me, and have now come to take me with You. I am ready, let us go."

After saying these words she crossed her arms on

her breast and fixed her eyes on Heaven. Her mother, who had never withdrawn her eyes from her, became alarmed when she saw her lying so still. She went closer to her, and found that Jesus had indeed taken His little child to Heaven as He had promised.

THE SOUVENIR OF HIS FIRST COMMUNION DAY.

" Oh, mother, I am so happy to-day. I would like that this day should never end."

These were the words a little boy of ten years of age said to his mother as he sat by her side on the evening of his First Communion day.

" My dearest boy," said his mother, Madame de Kerflac, " these happy days in this world are rare, and they pass away as others do. It is in Heaven only that we shall enjoy that perfect happiness that will never end.

Alain de Kerflac crossed his arms on his breast, and said in raising up his eyes towards the heavens above him, in which the stars were now shining with great brilliancy : " Oh, how I even now wish to be in Heaven with God !"

" And would you leave your mother alone and disconsolate in this weary world ?"

" No, mother beloved," said the boy earnestly ; " you will come with me, for you know well that your little Alain can have no happiness without you."

" But, my dearest child," the mother answered, " we must before all things else do the most holy will of God. This is what you promised your beloved Jesus this morning when for the first time you received Him in Communion."

Alain was the only child of the Countess of Kerflac, who had some years previously lost her husband. She had been the mother of three other children, whom God had called to Heaven in their innocence.

Hence we need not be surprised at the great affection she had bestowed on him. But, being a Christian mother, she did not spoil him by over-kindness, for she knew that there is nothing so injurious to a child as to bring him up in this way.

Alain therefore grew up gentle, obedient, and pious, and was remarkable for his unaffected politeness, for politeness is the twin-sister of charity. He was open and generous in his behaviour, and his lips were never sullied with a lie.

That same evening of the day of his First Communion, before retiring to rest, his mother took off the badge he wore at the altar in the morning, and which he was privileged to wear all that great day—the pure white silk badge, the emblem of innocence and joy—and pressing it to her lips with a tear in her eye, she said to him : " My dearest Alain, preserve this badge as long as you live, and when the storms of temptation arise around you—for to you, as well as to the rest of mankind this life will be a perpetual warfare—it will remind you of the promises you have made to-day. And if it ever come to pass that you have wandered from the path of virtue, promise me, my child, to return to it again, and to live always in the practices of our holy religion, which I have taught you."

Alain at these tender words of his mother threw himself into her arms, weeping. " Oh, my beloved

mother, how can you ever imagine that I would ever cease to love that religion which has given me so many and so great joys to-day ? Yes, my dearest mother, I promise you. This little badge I will keep as my most precious treasure ; it will always be dear to me, and it will always remind me of this happy day."

A few minutes afterwards Alain de Kerflac was sweetly reposing in his little bed. Before retiring for the night the Countess looked long and lovingly on her beloved boy, sleeping peacefully and, no doubt, dreaming of the happy day, alas ! so quickly ended, and as she impressed a maternal kiss upon his innocent brow she silently prayed : " May he always be like this, O my God !"

Alain grew up a strong and healthy boy, and in due time reached his twenty-first year. He remained faithful to the promises he had made his mother and the resolution he had taken on his First Communion day. His mother's heart rejoiced as she watched him, still so fervent, so pious, and so good ; and again her prayer ascended heavenwards : " May he always be like this, O my God !"

But at this time an event occurred that filled the young man's heart with grief. One day, after they had returned from a long walk, the Countess became suddenly ill, and in three days she was brought to the brink of the tomb. The best physicians were called in by the son to attend her, and no expense was spared to prolong a life so dear to him. The hour appointed by Divine Providence had come : she herself perceived this, and without delay began to prepare for her passage into eternity. " All is now

finished with me so far as this world is concerned," she said to her son. " Go and bring hither the priest of God, that I may receive the Last Sacraments."

The priest came, but his work was light, for had she not daily been preparing for this her last hour ? The only cloud that seemed to cover her otherwise placid features was the thought that her beloved Alain would be left behind her in a world of danger. But was he not the child of God, as well as hers, and did not He love him more, infinitely more, than she did ?

Her last words to him were : " Oh, my child, remember always the promises you have made to God, and as long as you live keep the little white badge of your First Communion."

A few moments afterwards Madame de Kerflac fell asleep piously in the Lord, and Alain, plunged in grief, threw himself weeping on all that was left to him of her who was so dear to him.

When the funeral was over, Alain went to Paris, where one of his uncles occupied an important position, and under him obtained a lucrative employment.

In the midst of the gaiety of the capital the young man soon began to forget the lessons of his mother and the practices of his holy religion, which had formerly given him so much joy. The irreligious companions with whom he associated, and who mocked everything that spoke to them of God, by degrees made an impression on him, and he soon became like one of themselves. Had his good mother the Countess been still alive, she would almost have failed to recognize her son in the young

man now become, if not entirely impious, at least perfectly indifferent.

For some time he continued to live a dissipated life, in which he found only remorse and disappointment. His existence was to him now an intolerable burden. "What, after all, is life to me?" he said one day to himself. "I will soon put an end to all my troubles."

He took up a revolver for this purpose; but before he would use it for his unhallowed design he desired to write a few lines which would be read by those who might discover his inanimate body, and in which his servants or others might be freed from all blame.

He could not find a pen on his desk; he looked into other drawers, but without success. "This is unfortunate," he said; "where have I put my pens? However, a pencil will suit my purpose." And he sat down to write the letter with it. But, as he was about to begin his eyes fell on a little box which he had formerly placed in one of the drawers, and which he had for a long time forgotten. He opened it, and he saw for the first time for many years the white silk badge of his First Communion, which he himself had placed there in the days of his innocence.

At the same moment the words his mother said to him on that First Communion day came back vividly before his mind: "If you ever should lose the Faith of your childhood, may the sight of this little badge bring you back to it again."

Two tears came unbidden into his eyes, and he once again, as he had done before, pressed his lips against it as he held it in his hands. He fell on his

knees and exclaimed in the midst of now abundant tears : " What was I about to do ? To commit a crime by which I could never, never see my mother again—my mother who in Heaven is waiting for me. O my God, be Thou for ever blessed for having so lovingly preserved me from this terrible evil."

Alain threw away the revolver and lay down to enjoy a calm repose. The next morning his first act was to go to the church, where, prostrate at the foot of the altar, he uttered these words : " O my God, I have come back again, and with Thy holy grace I will never again forsake the Faith of my childhood."

He kept his word.

But he kept also, and dearly cherished, the badge of his First Communion. *Souvenirs de la Ire Com.*

XLIII

THE HOLY EUCHARIST: HOLY MASS

I. What is the Holy Mass?

My child, the Blessed Eucharist is not a Sacrament only, it is also a Sacrifice. When we speak of a Sacrifice, we mean the offering of a victim by a priest to God alone, in testimony of His being the Sovereign Lord of all things.

From the beginning of the world sacrifices were offered up to God, as we read everywhere in the Sacred Scriptures; but these sacrifices were only figures of the great Sacrifice of the New Law which is the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Holy Mass is the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, really present on the altar under the appearances of bread and wine, and offered to God for the living and for the dead.

The Holy Mass is one and the same Sacrifice with that of the Cross, inasmuch as Christ, Who offered Himself, a bleeding Victim on the cross, to His Heavenly Father, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner on the altar through the ministry of His priests.

THE WORDS OF GOD BY MALACHIAS THE PROPHET.

God, through His prophet Malachias, reproached the people of the Jews for their ingratitude, and the priests of the ancient law for not offering pure sacrifices ; and He announced to them that when the fullness of time had come there would be a sacrifice offered among the Gentiles in every land which He would be pleased lovingly to accept. These are the words of the prophet :

" The son honoureth the father, and the servant his master : if, then, I be a Father, where is My honour ? and if I be a Master, where is My fear ? saith the Lord of hosts.

" To you, O priests, that despise My Name, and have said : ' Wherein have we despised Thy Name ?' You offered polluted bread upon My altar, and you say : ' Wherein have we polluted Thee ?' In that you say : ' The table of the Lord is contemptible.'

" I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts : and I will not receive a gift at your hands.

" From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation : for My Name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and My Name is dreadful among the Gentiles " (Mal. i).

THE CONVERSION OF A GREAT KING WITH ALL HIS COURT.

Towards the middle of the thirteenth century a certain priest, by name John Perez, fell into the

hands of the Moors of the kingdom of Murcia along with many others who were taken prisoners, and was brought into the presence of the Emir, Keit-Abulet.

"Who are you?" asked the barbarian King, for he saw that the dress he wore was different from that of the people who were with him, and that his countenance proclaimed him to be a man of superior rank.

"I am a Christian and a Catholic priest," he answered with a calm dignity.

"What is a Catholic priest?" asked the Emir. "What is his power, and how great is his authority?"

"The priest of the true God," replied Perez, "fulfils a sublime ministry. His power is greater even than that of the greatest potentates; he is able by uttering certain words to change bread into the Body of the King of Heaven and earth, and wine into His Blood."

The Emir and his courtiers smiled when they heard these words, which they considered as proceeding from a deranged intellect, and with one accord cried out that such a thing was quite impossible. At the same time, to prove to the Emir as well as to themselves that such must be the case, they unanimously besought the Emir to put his power to the test by ordering him to perform this mysterious action.

The priest felt within him an interior inspiration to yield his consent to their request; but as he had none of the things necessary for the oblation of the Holy Mass, he informed the Emir that he would

offer up in his presence and in that of his people the Holy Sacrifice, if only he would send a courier to Cuenta, a town situated at a considerable distance, and procure for him what he required ; at the same time saying that he would give the messenger a letter to one who would provide him with what he desired.

The Emir, anxious to continue these proceedings to the end, despatched instantly a courier to the town indicated by the priest.

A few days afterwards the messenger returned, bringing with him the vestments, the sacred vessels, and whatever else was necessary for Holy Mass.

On the following day, which was the festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the priest assumed the sacred vestments, and prepared to celebrate Mass. When he was about to begin, he perceived that there was no figure of Christ upon the cross in the middle of the altar. He did not begin to say Mass when he discovered this defect, for the Crucifix is one of the principal things required for the celebration of the Most Holy Sacrifice, and he stood immovable at the foot of the altar, considering within himself if, in the circumstances, he could offer up the Holy Mass before the cross only, without the image of Our Lord attached.

But God, in His wonderful providence, having decreed to operate many wonderful works for the glory of His holy Name during the celebration of that Mass, came to his assistance, and dispelled his anxieties. For two angels entered by the window of the tower wherein the people had assembled, and in the sight of the Emir and his nobles went towards

the altar, and placed in the hands of the celebrant a most magnificent Crucifix, informing him at the same time that there was embedded within it a relic of the true cross on which Our Divine Saviour died, and that it was a present from Robert, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

In the meantime the Emir, filled with awe and astonishment at what he had seen, felt within his heart sentiments of veneration for which he could not account; and, as his eyes were riveted on the priest standing at the foot of the altar clad in his sacred vestments, he seemed to see something superhuman in his appearance.

This astonishment was a hundred-fold increased when, after the words of consecration had been pronounced, he beheld in the sacred Host a beautiful Child in the midst of dazzling splendour.

This exterior light which appeared to the eyes of his body was but a feeble representation of that which had at the same moment penetrated his heart, and which caused him, as if intuitively, to understand all the doctrines revealed in our holy Faith.

When the Holy Sacrifice was ended, he went to the priest and informed him of what he had seen during Mass, and of the strange sentiments which now filled his soul, and besought him to instruct him and his Court in the full knowledge of the Catholic Faith. Not long afterwards, not only was he himself baptized, but also his entire Court, together with most of the nobility and a vast multitude of the people. He died at the age of forty-two, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the anniversary of the wonderful apparition to him of

Our Divine Lord at Mass, having persevered in the Faith to the end and given edification to all by the fervour of his life.

ALPH. CIACONNIUS : *De signis S. Crucis.*

II. How the Saints and Pious Christians esteemed the Holy Sacrifice.

Since the Holy Mass is the greatest act of our holy Religion, and the chief means of obtaining from God every grace and blessing, we need not be surprised at the anxiety of the Saints to assist at Holy Mass. Imitate their example, my child, that, like them, you also may receive through this great sacrifice the blessings God bestowed upon them.

BROTHER FRANCIS MIRACULOUSLY HEARS MASS.

Brother Francis de Durazzo, a Franciscan lay brother, held one of the most humble positions in the monastery to which he belonged, but he ennobled it by the practice of the most sublime virtues. Chief among these was his love for Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

He had been appointed cook of the monastery, and he in consequence spent most of his time in the kitchen, but he performed his work with all the perfection in his power, knowing that by doing so he would merit as much in the eyes of God as if he were all day engaged in prayer and contemplation.

Whenever he had a moment to spare from his work, his love for Jesus on the altar drew him to the church to kneel there at His feet. And he seemed to enjoy supreme happiness when he was able to hear several Masses in succession.

On one occasion when he had thus prolonged his devotions in the church for a considerable time, it happened that the cats, of which there was quite an army in the neighbourhood, went to the kitchen and obtained an entrance to the place where the food intended for the dinner of the community was already prepared, which they entirely consumed or destroyed. It happened, moreover, that that day was a fast day, and the brethren had not yet broken their fast, and in consequence of this, looked forward to the hour of dinner with some little eagerness. When the pious lay brother returned from the chapel, and had seen the devastation in the kitchen, he was filled with unutterable dismay; but as this could not remedy the evil, he saw no alternative but to go to the Superior and humbly make known to him the evil done and the cause of it. The Superior showed him how he had neglected his duty in not attending to the work imposed upon him, and ordered him to return to the kitchen, and for the future to remain in it after hearing one Mass in the early morning. The servant of God obeyed with his usual punctuality; but it was a great grief to him that he could no longer go and kneel before the altar where he had so often felt so much sweetness and joy.

It happened on a certain great festival day that God was pleased to bestow on him an extraordinary favour, which compensated him for all the pleasure and joys of which, through obedience, he had been deprived.

Hearing the church bell announce the elevation of the sacred Host at the High Mass in the church,

he knelt down on the floor of the kitchen, and, turning towards the place where the church was, he joined his hands together and thus prayed to God: "O my Lord and my God, obedience compels me to remain here whilst my more favoured brethren are able to assist at Holy Mass, and I cannot look upon Thee present on the altar as they can do. I am here, as it were, in a prison, and no longer enjoy the happiness and consolation I used to feel when kneeling at Thy sacred feet. But, O my God, I do not complain; on the contrary I bless Thee in this as in everything else, and joyfully resign myself to Thy most Divine Will."

Scarcely had he ended this prayer when he suddenly saw the wall of the kitchen open from floor to ceiling; then, one after the other, the other three walls which intervened between him and the church, so that he could easily behold the priest standing at the altar. He was thus enabled to be present at the Mass as well as the rest of the community. When Mass was ended, the walls once more resumed their former position, and nothing remained but a mark upon the stones at the place where the opening had been, as a perpetual memorial of the miracle. The report of this prodigy was soon spread far and wide, and many pilgrims came from a distance to offer up their prayers in the monastery chapel, and to look upon the walls which had been so miraculously opened.

This event took place in the monastery of Ojera, where afterwards the remains of the holy religious lay brother were preserved with great veneration.

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD WHO HEARD MASS EVERY DAY.

When St. Felix of Cantalicia was twelve years old he was accustomed to go, even then, very frequently to the Holy Sacraments, and was able to hear Mass every day.

In order that he might not lose the blessings those receive who are present at the Holy Sacrifice, he used to leave his flock under the care of his Heavenly Father; and God, to show that this filial confidence was pleasing to Him, sometimes sent an angel to watch over them in his absence. The people of the country used to say that while Felix was absent at the chapel they saw, guarding his flocks, a shepherd-boy of about the same age as he was, but who was quite unknown to any of them. In course of time this miracle of God in favour of his little servant was discovered, and they began to feel a reverential awe in presence of the holy child.

THE PRIEST'S TONGUE MIRACULOUSLY RESTORED.

It happened many centuries ago that two pious priests were passing through the province of Albi, in France, where at the time dwelt a vast number of heretics known by the name of Albigenses. On the way they reached a church which was in a half-ruined condition, into which they entered to say their prayers. One of them was inspired by his devotion to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in honour of our Blessed Lady, as it was a Saturday.

At the moment when he was about to begin Mass, and while standing at the foot of the altar, a large

number of these heretics entered the church fully armed. They went up to the priest, and, laying hold of him, clad as he was in his sacred vestments, dragged him away from the altar, and after treating him in the most cruel manner through hatred of Our Lord, cut out his tongue by the root, in order, as they were heard to say, that he might never again be able to offer up the Holy Sacrifice.

The other priest, his companion, when the miscreants had departed, raised him from the ground and carried him to a neighbouring monastery of Cluny, and confided him to the care of the monks. When they learned what had taken place, they not only tended him with the most affectionate care, but looked on him as a martyr who had suffered for the sake of God.

Not long afterwards came the Feast of Our Lord's Epiphany. During the night the monks, as usual, arose and went to the monastery church to sing the matins of the festival. The wounded priest was in the meantime lying on his bed awake. The sound of the beautiful music in the church reached him in his cell, and he listened to it with rapture, following in his mind the words they sang, and grieved only that, since he had been deprived of his tongue, he could no longer join his voice with theirs in their holy prayer.

At that moment a thought came into his mind: if he could not join his voice with theirs, he could at least rise and go into the church, and thus be nearer to those who were singing the praises of God.

So he went quietly into the church, and, kneeling

before one of the altars at some distance from the choir, prostrated himself in prayer before it. And as he prayed in silence and sadness, the thought came into his mind to beseech Our Lady, the Mother of Mercy, who is all-powerful with God, to restore to him his tongue, of which he had been deprived because he had desired to honour her on the day of the week consecrated to her, by offering up the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The most sweet Mother of God did not delay the answer to his prayer, for scarcely had he ended his petition, when he saw her standing at his side smiling tenderly upon him. She said to him in words which filled his heart with joy : " Since your tongue has been cut out, because of your love for me and because of the homage you desired to offer my Divine Son in the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, as every good and faithful servant should do, I come at your request to heal you, and to restore to you the tongue which you have lost, in order that you may be able to continue to glorify Him by the celebration of the Most Holy Mysteries."

On saying these words she told him to open his mouth, and with her own most blessed fingers placed his tongue, which she held in them, into it, as firmly as it had been before, the only mark left being a white thin line, to be a perpetual remembrance of the miracle.

Then she said to him : " Now offer up every day to God the Sacrifice of Praise, and pour out before Him your vows and your acts of thanksgiving." When she had said these words she disappeared from his sight, surrounded with dazzling splendour.

The happy priest, full of gratitude, began immediately to praise God and Our Lady for the blessing thus bestowed upon him ; and with a loud voice he sang these words : " The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever."

At that moment the religious, who were about to leave the church, hearing these words, and not knowing whence they came, hastened with one accord to the place whence the sounds seemed to proceed, and seeing the priest kneeling before the altar, whose tongue they knew had been cut out, they were filled with amazement, and would not believe their eyes nor their ears.

But when the holy man told them what had taken place they were filled with unspeakable joy, and falling on their knees beside him, they joined their voices with his in hymns of thanksgiving to God for His ineffable goodness to those who faithfully serve Him.

J. BAGATA : *Admir. orb.*

THE BEAUTIFUL GOLDEN COINS.

In the days of the great persecution in England, when to assist at Holy Mass was a crime punishable by fines, exile, and even death, there lived a fervent Catholic who was willing, like so many others in those terrible days, to suffer the loss of all he possessed rather than neglect to be present at the offering up of the Divine Sacrifice.

He was one day arrested in the performance of this pious duty, and brought before the public tribunal. As he possessed a considerable amount of wealth, he was condemned to pay the sum of five hundred pieces of gold. On hearing his sentence,

signs of great joy overspread his countenance, and going home, he opened his repository, and chose from among the gold pieces it contained the most beautiful and the newest he could find. He chose in preference the Portuguese coins, because on them were impressed the figure of the Cross.

When he returned to the judge who had condemned him, and delivered them up to him, the latter was surprised at their freshness and their beauty, and in a tone of mockery asked him why he had chosen the newest and the best coins in his possession for the payment of the fine imposed.

The devout nobleman replied with a calmness which did not fail to impress those who heard him: "My conscience would certainly give me no peace if I ventured to pay in ordinary coin the penalty you inflicted on me for the great favour God has vouchsafed to me, to be present at Holy Mass, and to be permitted to adore my God and my Saviour in the august mystery of the altar."

O my child, should not the faith of our forefathers, and their ardent desire to assist at the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, inflame the hearts of us their children with the most profound respect for these holy Mysteries and the desire of participating in them as often as it is in our power?

AN ENGLISH OFFICER AT MASS.

In the life of Lieutenant De Lisle the following incident is recorded: There was at one time a French man-of-war stationed not far from his ship in one of the harbours of the Pacific Ocean; and as there was a priest on board this ship, De Lisle thought it

best to take the men there to hear Mass rather than go on shore.

Leave was asked and obtained; so a quarter of an hour before the time for Mass he arrived with his men. The men were led into the place where the Holy Sacrifice was to be offered up, but De Lisle himself was invited by the officers into the cabin, where they showed him every politeness.

By-and-by, the quarter of an hour having expired, De Lisle looked at his watch and said: "Ah, I see it is now the hour for Mass to begin."

These French officers were Catholics, but lived as too many even in this country do—in total disregard of religion. They never expected the young English officer would himself go to Mass, but that he would only see that his men went.

So when De Lisle said, "It is now time to go to Mass," they replied, in astonishment: "Mass! surely you are not going to Mass!"

"Yes, I am," said De Lisle; and at once taking leave of them, he went off and entered the place where Mass was to be said, and, humbly kneeling down in the midst of his men, heard Mass with great devotion.

About the time of the "Sanctus," one of the French officers came quietly in. On the following Sunday two or three came in. The Sunday after, the whole of the officers attended Mass from the very commencement, and they continued to do so for the six weeks during which the two men-of-war were within easy reach of each other.

Life of Lieutenant de Lisle.

III. The Ends for which Holy Mass is Offered.

There are four ends, my child, for which the Holy Mass is offered, and every time you assist at Mass you should try to recall these four ends to your mind.

The first is to give supreme honour and glory to God; the second is to thank Him for all His benefits; the third, to obtain pardon for our sins; and the fourth to obtain all other graces and blessings through Jesus Christ.

INFINITE VALUE OF ONE MASS.

There was once a certain holy man whose heart was totally inflamed with the love of God, and the desire of seeing Him daily more and more glorified.

"O my God," he was often heard to say, "O my God, would that I had as many hearts, and as many tongues as there are leaves upon the trees, or stars in the heavens, or drops of water in the ocean, that I might be able to love Thee and praise Thee as much as Thou deservest! Oh, would that it were in my power to lay before Thy feet all the creatures Thou hast made, that they might be all consumed there as a holocaust in honour of Thine infinite Majesty! O my God, enable me to love Thee more than all creatures on earth, and more than all the angels and Saints of Paradise."

One day, as he was praying in this manner, he heard near him the voice of Jesus Christ. "Be consoled, my son," said Our Blessed Lord to him. "By hearing even one Mass devoutly you will give Me all the honour you desire to give Me, and infinitely more besides." *St. Jure.*

My child, this shows you what you can do to honour God in a manner worthy of Him. Take the resolution, then, of always assisting at Mass with very great devotion and attention.

ST. ISIDORE OF MADRID.

St. Isidore, who was a hired labourer in the service of a farmer near Madrid, in Spain, had the custom of rising every morning at a very early hour, so that he might gain as much time as would permit him to hear Holy Mass before beginning his daily labours.

At first he had to endure many harsh words uttered by his fellow-labourers, who were pained at seeing him more devout than themselves. This dislike soon gave place to hatred, and one day they went to the farmer, their master, and accused Isidore of neglecting his work.

His master sent for him and reproached him severely for his conduct, because by going to hear Mass he was neglecting to fulfil the obligations for which he was receiving wages.

The saintly man replied: "My master, when the time of the harvest comes, and you find that you have lost something because I have not attended to my work, you may keep from my wages a sum you would consider equal to the loss you have sustained."

When the time of the harvest came it was discovered that it was more abundant than in former years, and had greatly surpassed all expectation.

A pious legend is also recorded of this humble man of God. One day, when he had gone to hear Holy Mass as usual, his master, going into the fields,

saw the oxen attached to the plough guided by the hands of angels.

From that hour the farmer, instead of trying to prevent Isidore from hearing Mass every day, on the contrary, encouraged him to persevere in this devotion, since it was the cause of so many blessings to himself, and he gave thanks to God for having been permitted to possess in his employment a man so beloved by Him, and one through whom so many benedictions descended upon his house.

Life of St. Isidore of Madrid.

HOW A DEVOUT LAYMAN HEARD HOLY MASS.

In the life of M. Bernières, who at one time occupied a prominent position in the French Court, we read the following words, which were a testimony to the faith and piety which reigned in his heart :

" I would willingly prefer to lose the entire world, if it belong to me, rather than neglect to assist at one Mass at which it was in my power to assist ; for I know that in hearing Mass I am present at the greatest action that can be performed on this earth, and that I can thereby offer infinite honour to God, because Jesus Christ Himself, Who is equal in all things to His Eternal Father, annihilates Himself and renews the sacrifice He once offered upon the Cross.

" It is true that it is the priest at the altar that offers up this great Sacrifice, but he offers it in the name of the whole Church, and in particular of those who are present, and who have the happiness of offering it up along with him.

" Oh, what consolation fills my soul when I have had the privilege of assisting at Holy Mass ! I

have offered up to God a sacrifice of infinite value, and although I have not the honour of being a priest I have given Him infinite glory ; I have worthily thanked Him ; I have paid him a price sufficient to cancel the debts I have contracted by my sins ; in a word, by that one action, I have performed a work greater than all the other works of my life.

" O my Jesus, what an inestimable treasure we possess in Thee if we only knew its greatness as we ought !"

Life of M. Bernières.

THE CHAINS FALL OFF THE CAPTIVE SOLDIER

St. Bede the Venerable, in his " Ecclesiastical History," relates the following story which, he says, was told him by some of those who had heard it related by the person himself to whom it happened :

" In the ninth year of the reign of King Egfrid, a great battle was fought between him and Ethelred, King of the Mercians.

" In that battle it happened that a certain young man belonging to the King was left as dead. Having lain on the field all that day and the next night among the dead around him, he at length regained consciousness, and, rising from the ground, he bound up his wounds in the best way he could.

" Then, having rested a while, he stood up, and began to go forward in search of some of his friends, who might take care of him ; but in so doing he was discovered, and taken by some of the enemy's army, and carried before their lord, who was an Earl belonging to King Ethelred.

" Being asked by him who he was, and fearing to own himself a soldier, he answered : ' I am a peasant,

poor and married, and I came to the army with others to bring provisions to the soldiers.'

"The Earl entertained him, and ordered his wounds to be dressed; and when he began to recover, to prevent his escaping, he ordered him to be bound. But wonderful to relate, as soon as those who had bound him departed, his bonds were all miraculously loosened.

"Now it happened that this young man had a brother called Tunna, who was a priest and abbot in the monastery of Tunnacester. This priest, hearing that his brother had been slain in the fight, went to the battlefield to see if he could find his body among the dead. In his search he found one whom he took to be that of his brother, and caused it to be conveyed to his monastery, where he buried it honourably, and for many days offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of his soul. Now it afterwards came to be known that it was on these days, and at the very hour when the Divine Sacrifice was offered up, that the chains fell off the prisoner's limbs.

"In the meantime the Earl was amazed on hearing of what had taken place with regard to him, and made inquiries why he could not be bound, and if he had any spells about him, of which he had so often heard in fabulous stories.

"He answered: 'O Earl, I know nothing of these evil things of which you speak. But I have a brother who is a priest in the monastery of the city wherein I dwell, and I know that he, thinking I am among the slain, has caused the Most Holy Mass to be offered up for me; and I know that if I were now in truth in the other life my soul there, through the

oblation of the Divine Sacrifice, would be delivered from all pain.'

" Having been retained by the Earl a prisoner for some time, those who attentively observed him saw by his countenance, his demeanour, and conversation, that he belonged to a family of good position. The Earl then privately sent for him, and asked him to make known to him who he was, promising that no harm would come to him if he disclosed to him the truth.

" When he made known to him his real condition, and declared that he was indeed a servant of the King, the Earl made answer : ' I perceived clearly by your answer to me that you were no peasant. You also can understand that you deserve to be put to death, because in that same battle in which you were engaged all my relations and brothers were killed. Yet I will not do so, because such would be a breach of my promise.'

" As soon, therefore, as he had recovered from his wounds he sold him in London to an inhabitant of Friesland. This man also put chains upon him to lead him away, but they fell off him as before. Then other bonds, stronger than the first, were made use of, but with a similar result.

" The buyer, seeing that it was impossible to bind him, gave him permission to procure his ransom, if such were in his power. Now it was at the third hour of the day (nine o'clock in the morning) when the Masses were wont to be said, that his bonds were generally loosed. He having taken an oath that he would either return or send him the money for his ransom, went into Kent to King Lothaire, who was the son to the Sister of Queen Ethelreda, of

whom he had at one time been a servant. From him he obtained the price of his ransom, and, as he had promised, sent it to his master.

"Returning afterwards to his own country, and coming to his brother, he gave him an exact account of all that had taken place. It was then that he learned that his bonds generally fell from him at the time when the Holy Sacrifice was offered up for him and that other blessings had come upon him in his many dangers when his brother interceded for him at the altar.

"Many persons on hearing this wonderful story were stirred up in faith and piety, and hastened to the help of their deceased friends by praying for them, giving alms to the poor on their behalf, and especially by causing the Most Holy Mass to be offered up for them; for now they understood more clearly that such a saving sacrifice was available for the redemption both of soul and body.

"This story," continues Venerable Bede, "was also told me by some of those who had heard it related by the person himself to whom it happened."

V. BEDE: *Eccles. Hist.*, B. iv., c. 22.

THE ADMIRAL AND THE LITTLE CHILD.

The great Admiral Albuquerçue, conqueror of the East Indies, was a man of singular faith and piety.

On one occasion, in the midst of a terrible hurricane, his fleet was in imminent danger of being destroyed. Every effort was made to save it, and the lives of so many brave sailors who were on the ships, but all human power was of no avail in that terrible tempest.

All seemed lost, but the Admiral, whose thoughts were now fixed on that eternity into which he saw all of them must soon enter, was suddenly roused as if by an inspiration from Heaven. Taking up into his arms a little child who stood near him on the deck, he raised him up towards Heaven, and in a voice louder than even the roaring of the tempest, thus prayed to God :

" O great God of Heaven, if our sins have caused Thee to rise up in anger against us, for we are all indeed sinners and guilty before Thee, let the sight of this innocent child move Thee to mercy ; look upon him yet beautiful in his baptismal innocence, and for his sake be pleased to turn away Thy anger from us and show us mercy."

" At that same moment," relates the historian, " the tempest abated, and a great calm fell upon the ocean, to the great consolation of those mariners who had expected only a watery grave."

In all the dangers which may surround us in this world both for soul and body, it is in a special manner in the Sacrifice of Mass that we shall procure for ourselves the help that we need. For in the Mass it is Jesus Christ Himself Who implores His Heavenly Father to have mercy on us, and to forgive us our sins, and to turn away from us the arrows of His justice which our sins have caused Him to send forth against us. *Hist. of the Indies.*

THE QUEEN'S PAGE.

In the palace of the King of Portugal there was a young man who was remarkable for his great piety. St. Elizabeth, the Queen, generally em-

ployed him in her works of charity to the poor, because he was so good and prudent, and fulfilled so carefully the duties entrusted to him.

In the same palace there was another young man who led a very different kind of life. Seeing his fellow-servant preferred to him by the Queen, he was filled with jealousy and envy. " I shall soon destroy his fine reputation," he said, " and we shall no longer be deceived by his hypocrisy."

So he went to the King and told him he had discovered a great crime that had been committed in the palace, and that the Queen's page was more attached to her than the law of God permitted.

The King believed the story he had heard, especially as the young man who had told him of it was one of his special favourites. In his anger he determined secretly to take away the life of the accused.

That same day, being on horseback, he happened to pass near the place where certain men were engaged preparing lime in a lime-kiln. He took the men aside and told them that on the following day he would send a certain young man to ask them this question : " Have the orders of the King been fulfilled ?" " As soon as you shall hear these words," said the King, " you shall take the young man, and cast him at once into the lime-kiln, that he may be destroyed, for he has been found guilty of a crime that deserves this punishment."

The men said they would do as the King desired, and he immediately left them.

Next morning he sent for the Queen's page and said to him : " You shall go to the place in the forest

where the lime-kilns are, and you shall ask the men in charge of them if they have fulfilled the orders I gave them."

The young man at once departed, without having any suspicion of the evil that was hanging over him.

On the way to the place he heard the consecration bell of a neighbouring chapel ringing. He entered the chapel, and, kneeling down, heard Mass devoutly to the end. Then he saw another priest coming to the altar to say Mass. He heard this one also, as well as another that followed it.

In the meantime the King had become impatient to know if his orders had been executed, and if the Queen's page were really dead. So calling one of his servants who happened to be near—it was the same one who had falsely accused the other—he told him to go to the lime-kiln and see if his orders had been fulfilled. The young man, being anxious to see if his enemy had been destroyed—for he knew the orders that had been given—ran thither in great haste.

As soon as he arrived, he said : " My master the King hath sent me to ask you if you have fulfilled his royal commands."

No sooner did the men hear these words than, thinking that he was the one the King was to send them to be made away with, they seized him, and, notwithstanding his protestations that it was not he, but another, whom the King meant, they threw him into the lime-kiln among the burning lime, where in a few moments he was utterly consumed.

Not long after this the innocent servant of the Queen, having heard the third Mass to the end,

continued on his way to the lime-kiln. When he reached the spot he said to the men in charge: "The King has sent me to ask if his royal orders have been accomplished."

The men answered that they had done as the King had told them, and the young man returned home to the palace to give his answer to the King.

When the King saw him enter he was filled with amazement, and could scarcely believe his eyes. "How is it that *you* are here?" he said.

"I have just returned from the lime-kilns," was the reply, "and they told me that they had executed your royal orders."

The King was filled with terrible anger, for he saw that, contrary to his expectations, his favourite servant had been killed instead of the one now before him.

"Where have you been, and why were you so long in doing what I told you?" said the angry King.

"Pardon me, my lord, if I have been in fault," answered the page. "But on my way to fulfil your Majesty's commands I heard the bell of a wayside chapel ring for the elevation at Mass, and I entered to adore God present on the altar. Then began a second Mass, and after it a third, and I remained till it also was done; for my father, on his death-bed, when he was giving me his last blessing, recommended me to hear to the end every Mass I saw commenced. So I remained in the church till the end of the last Mass, and then I continued on my way to execute your Majesty's orders."

The King was struck with the manner in which

this strange event had occurred, and when he examined into the matter he discovered the innocence of the Queen's page and the guilt of the other who had calumniated him.

Thus did God deliver from temporal evil one who devoutly assisted at the Most Holy Sacrifice of the altar. *Life of St. Elizabeth of Portugal.*

IV. Mass for the Faithful Departed.

The Holy Ghost tells us in the Scriptures that it is "a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins." The Church of God has always taught us that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most efficacious work of mercy we can perform for their relief. And God has been pleased at various times to reveal to His chosen ones on earth how powerfully we can assist the faithful departed by offering up Mass for them, and how many and great are the blessings God bestows on those who practise this great work of charity.

"Prince, I come to thank you."

A Polish Prince who had become an infidel was about to publish a book denying the immortality of the soul, when he met in his park a poor woman who had just lost her husband, and who, with many tears, implored him to give her some money that she might have some Masses said for him. Although the Prince considered it mere superstition to have Masses said for a deceased person, his kindness nevertheless induced him to give to the poor woman

a piece of gold, whereupon she hastened to the church, and asked the priest to say Masses for the repose of the soul of her husband.

Some days later the Prince was occupied in revising his manuscript before it went to press, when suddenly he saw standing before his writing-table a Polish peasant, who addressed him in these words: "Prince, I come to thank you; I am the husband of that poor woman to whom you gave some days ago a piece of money to enable her to have Masses said for my poor soul. This act of charity has been so pleasing to God that He has allowed me to come to you in order to thank you, and to assure you that there is a life after this. It is now your duty to make good use of this favour granted to you." Thereupon the man disappeared like a shadow. The Prince destroyed his manuscript, renounced his infidelity, and lived as a good Christian until the end of his life.

LACORDAIRE: *Conferences on the Immortality of the Soul.*

OSTORGIUS, COUNT OF SICILY, AND EUSEBIUS OF SARDINIA.

Ostorgius, Count of Sicily, and Eusebius, Lord of Sardinia, were at war, the one against the other. The former possessed great treasures of gold and silver, and counted an immense multitude of men who formed his army, and marched under his banner; the latter was deficient in all these things, but he possessed those riches which are more important in the day of need—namely, those of true virtue, which he showed forth in the works of piety and charity he daily performed.

He had built many churches, and established religious houses to increase devotion among his people ; but his principal design in doing all this was for the relief and deliverance of the souls suffering in the flames of Purgatory. One of the towns belonging to his dukedom was called the " City of the Souls Departed," because all the revenues that he received from it were specially consecrated to pious works, and particularly the offering up of Masses for their relief.

Now it happened that Ostorgius, the enemy of our pious Prince, urged on doubtlessly by the Evil One, laid siege to that city and captured it. Eusebius was grieved to the heart at this sad event : he would willingly have sacrificed any other city of his dominions, even the chief amongst them, if that one had only been spared to him. But what could he do to recover it ? He called together all his officers that he might consult with them what was best to be done. With one accord they declared that it would be rashness itself to try to regain it, since their army was so inferior to that of their enemy, both in numbers and equipment.

In his anxiety he had recourse to prayer, and procured the celebration of many Masses that God might direct him how to act. At the same time he poured forth his supplications to the holy souls now in Heaven who had been delivered from the pains of Purgatory by his means, to restore to him that city which belonged to them.

From that moment, full of confidence in the help of God, and assured of the justice of his cause, he, having gathered together his entire army, marched

heroically towards the city, and drew up his forces in battle array at a little distance from it.

Then he sent out scouts to examine the position of the enemy, and to discover, if possible, its probable strength. They had not proceeded far when they suddenly retraced their steps in great haste towards the camp, trembling from head to foot, their countenances pale with fear. When asked the cause of their dismay, they answered that they had seen approaching in the distance an immense army completely clad in white, and of a most formidable appearance.

Eusebius, on hearing this, was at first somewhat disturbed with anxious forebodings; but in a short time his confidence was renewed, and he despatched four men-at-arms to reconnoitre, and to return to him immediately to report.

On their approach four soldiers of the white-robed army came forward towards them, and made known to them that they were members of an auxiliary legion sent by God from the other world to the assistance of their pious General; and they counselled them not in any way to be afraid, for they would certainly be victorious.

The messengers returned to the camp, and joyfully reported to the little army the happy tidings. Eusebius in particular was filled with gladness. He desired, however, before engaging in battle, to go forth in person to behold these mysterious soldiers. When he reached the place where they were drawn up their leader came forth to meet him, and repeated to him the same words as had been said to his envoys. Then he praised him, in terms of the most enthusi-

astic gratitude, for his great works of piety he had performed in favour of the souls in Purgatory, and advised him to begin the battle without delay.

Eusebius immediately obeyed; but he took with him only one squadron of cavalry, because he counted chiefly on the valour of these celestial auxiliary forces whose number, to all appearance, must have exceeded forty thousand.

When Ostorgius perceived this immense army approaching with banners unfurled and well equipped for battle he was struck motionless from fear and astonishment. His alarm was only increased when his messengers brought him word that these warriors had been sent by God to take from him the "City of the Souls Departed," which he had unjustly taken possession of, and to restore it to its rightful owner. He saw at once that if he engaged in battle with so powerful a host he would infallibly be overcome, so he immediately decided to hand the city over to Eusebius, and for this purpose sent a deputation offering him peace and the possession of the city. As the pious Prince had taken up arms for no other purpose than to regain this place, and to avoid all useless shedding of blood, he easily submitted to the conditions of peace offered by his enemy. As soon as they were signed, the gates of the city were opened, and Eusebius and his entire army, together with his heavenly-sent auxiliaries, triumphantly entered it.

Eusebius then poured forth his heartfelt gratitude to the chief of the white-robed host, who said to him in answer: "All the men who form this army which you now see owe a deep debt of gratitude to

you, for they are the souls who have passed from Purgatory into Heaven by virtue of the Masses you have caused to be celebrated for them. If you persevere in this work of charity for the dead, you will procure for yourself many more protectors and defenders."

When he had uttered these words the celestial legions instantly disappeared, leaving the Prince penetrated with the sweetest consolation, and more than ever determined to help the Holy Souls, and to procure their deliverance by causing the Holy Sacrifice to be offered up more frequently in their behalf.

L. PINELLI: *De alt. vita.*

XLIV

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE: CONTRITION

I. The Sacrament of Penance.

Penance is a Sacrament whereby the sins, mortal or venial, which we have committed after Baptism are forgiven.

This Sacrament, besides forgiving sin, increases the grace of God in the soul. Jesus Christ instituted it when He breathed upon His Apostles, and gave them the power to forgive sins, saying: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

THE CURE OF THE PARALYTIC.

"And it came to pass," says St. Luke, "on a certain day as He sat teaching, that there were also Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, that were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was to heal them.

"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man who had the palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went up upon the

roof, and let him down through the tiles with his bed into the midst before Jesus. Whose faith when He saw, He said, 'Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

"And the Scribes and Pharisees began to think, saying, 'Who is this who speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?'

"And when Jesus knew their thoughts, answering He said to them, 'What is it you think in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy,) I say to thee, Arise take up thy bed, and go into thy house.'

"And immediately rising up before them, he took up the bed on which he lay; and went away to his house, glorifying God. And all were astonished; and they glorified God. And they were filled with fear, saying, 'We have seen wonderful things to-day.'" *St. Luke* v.

It was in this way Jesus Christ showed His power to forgive sins. This power He communicated to the Apostles and their successors, in these words: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

II. What Contrition is and how to obtain it.

My child, in the Sacrament of Penance there are three parts: Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction. We will consider in the first place what Contrition is, and how to obtain it, since it is the most important part of this Sacrament.

Contrition is a hearty sorrow for our sins, because by them we have offended so good a God, together with a firm purpose of amendment.

Nothing draws Our Divine Lord so near to us as telling Him that we are grieved for having offended Him. Say, then, from your heart such words as these : " O my God, I detest all the sins of my life ; I am sorry for them because they have offended Thee, my God, who art so good. I resolve never to commit them any more. My good God, pity me ; have mercy on me ; forgive me. Amen."

" WHY DO YOU WEEP, MY CHILD ?"

In a certain house where children were received for their education, there was the pious custom, when the time for First Communion drew near, that the more wealthy amongst them should help poor children in the city to prepare for that event, not only by giving them instructions, but by providing them with suitable clothing.

On the eve of that great day these children were assembled in one place for prayers and instructions. They had all been to Confession, and looked forward to the next morning with hearts full of joy and happiness. One child only, a little girl, sat by herself with a sad countenance, and tears flowing from her eyes.

The Superioress, seeing this, went to her and said : " Why do you weep, my child ? Are you ill ?"

" No," she answered.

" Have your companions been striking you, or have they said anything to grieve you ?"

" No," was again the only answer.

" Have you any affliction at home among your friends ?"

" Oh no," she again answered.

" What, then, my dear child, is the matter with you ? Tell me ; perhaps I may be able to comfort you."

The girl answered : " Oh, I am yet only a little child, and I have offended the good God so much ! I have been the cause of the sufferings and death of Jesus on the Cross ! How could I be joyful when I think of all that ?"

The Superioress consoled the humble child by telling her how much God loves those who are sorry for having offended Him. Next morning she made her First Communion with angelic piety.

THE SORROW OF THE STUDENT.

There lived in the great city of Paris a young student who had committed many sins. God gave him the grace of sincere repentance. He went to the monastery of St. Victor in that city, and asked to be conducted to the Father Superior. As soon as he had entered the room he fell down at the feet of the priest, and began to make his Confession. But he had scarcely uttered a few words when he stopped. His sorrow was so great, and his tears so abundant, and his sighs so continuous that he could not utter another word.

" Perhaps, my child," said the Father to him, " if you were to write down your sins on a piece of paper, you would be better able to confess them."

The student did this, and, going to a table, wrote

down the sins he had committed, and then returned to the priest.

As soon as he began to read them his tears again choked him, and he could not pronounce a word. The Confessor asked him to give him the paper, that he might know the sins he had committed. He gave it to him. But as there arose in his mind certain doubts about some things that were written there, he asked the permission of the penitent to go to the Father Abbot to obtain his advice.

This permission the penitent gave very willingly, and the Confessor went to the Abbot with the paper in his hand.

Having unfolded it, he was surprised to find that there was no writing on it at all. "This is most strange," he said. "A few moments ago I read his whole confession written on this paper."

They both examined the paper, and there was not the least mark or letter on it; it was pure and white. Then they knew that God had been pleased to show by this wonder that He had blotted out the sins from the man's soul, as He had blotted them from the paper they held in their hands.

BISHOP DE LAMOTHE'S EXCELLENT PRACTICE.

In the life of Bishop de Lamothe we read of how he was accustomed to excite himself to sorrow for his sins.

In the first place he would imagine he was in a cemetery, standing at the brink of an open grave. "What do I see here?" he would say to himself. "I see a body that once lived in the world as I do now; it is now only a lifeless heap of dust or

rottenness or unseemly bones. And yet it had been created by God Himself, was indeed the greatest of His works on earth, the King of the whole universe, for the world was built as a great palace for him to dwell in. He was God's favourite, only a little less than the angels themselves, heir of the Kingdom of Heaven, created to be immortal, never to die. And this is all that now remains of him. What is it that has reduced him to this wretched condition ? It was death. And what was it that brought death into the world ? It was sin. How, then, could I love sin, since it has done us so much evil ?"

Then he would ascend in spirit into Heaven. " For whom are all these beautiful thrones ?" he would ask himself. " For whom are all these magnificent crowns, these immortal palms ? Are they prepared for all mankind ? Yes. They are intended for the King and the lowly, the wise one and him who is ignorant, for the child and for those who have grown old ; and there is one also for me. We have all the right to enjoy these things ; there is only one thing that can make us lose our claim to them, and that is sin. Ah, how I should abhor and detest that terrible evil, sin—sin, which, alas ! has perhaps even already deprived me of that incomparable heritage, and which I can never regain unless I sincerely repent. O my God, I am very sorry that ever I have sinned against Thee, and I will not sin again."

Then he thought he saw the gates of Hell opened before him. " Who are those sad ones whom I see burning in the midst of this terrible furnace, and uttering these piercing cries, and

calling, but in vain, for even one drop of water to cool their tongues? These are the victims of God's justice. They were all created to possess the everlasting joys of Paradise, but they can never possess them now. What is it that has deprived them of these joys? It is sin—perhaps only one sin. O my God, make me hate sin; make me suffer everything in this world, but save me in eternity from those dreadful flames. Have mercy on me, O my God, have mercy on me!"

He would next ascend Mount Calvary, and, kneeling at the foot of the Cross bedewed with the blood of Our Lord, as if he was present there in reality, he would thus address his soul: "O my soul, consider how much He suffers, He Who is nailed to that Cross. Look! from the top of His head to the sole of His feet His body is one large wound. Look again; His head is crowned with sharp thorns; His hands are pierced and His side is opened; His feet are fixed to that awful Cross with great nails, and His face is livid with the blows He has received. Who is He who thus suffers such cruel torments? Is He an evil-doer? No? Is He an ordinary man? No. An angel, perhaps? No. An archangel, then? No. It is the King of angels, the Eternal Word of God; God made man, your Saviour, your Friend, and your Father. And who reduced Him to that condition? Caiaphas? No. Pilate? No. The executioners? No. Who, then? It is yourself; it is the sin you have committed. Oh, how could you sin when you think of this!" And his soul was indeed filled with sorrow for his faults, which were the cause of all those evils

OH, TERESA, TERESA, SEE WHAT YOU HAVE DONE !"

It might be said with truth the heart of St. Teresa had been specially formed to love God in all perfection, for from her infancy her one desire was to love God, her one thought was how to do this perfectly.

Yet we read in her life that certain clouds of vanity, self-love, and self-complacency dimmed for a time the brightness of that charity which characterized her earliest years. She now found more pleasure in reading novels than in prayer, and her fervour and piety diminished so much that she was in great danger of losing the grace of God.

But God, Who was jealous of that heart which He had created to belong in a special manner to Himself, and Who had destined her to accomplish great works for His glory and for the salvation of souls, led her back to Himself by bestowing on her those powerful graces which made her see how far she had fallen from her former fervour, and the fearful precipice on the edge of which she was walking.

One day, kneeling alone and meditating on her little love of God, her eyes fell on an image of Jesus being scourged at the pillar, bleeding and covered with wounds. The sight of this representation of Jesus suffering brought before her mind the thought of the intense love He had for the salvation of mankind, and at the same time the cruelty and hardness of heart of His executioners, who dared to treat Him in this inhuman manner.

And as she was thus occupied she seemed to hear an interior voice which said to her : " Oh, Teresa,

Teresa, it is you who have done this to Me; it is you who have brought upon Me these awful sufferings, and instead of feeling compassion for Me, you are daily increasing them, and making them more painful."

This voice came upon her like a thunderclap; she became, as it were, stunned and immovable; a sword of sorrow had pierced her heart, and, bursting into tears, she cried out aloud in the violence of her grief, and in the end fainted at the foot of the holy image.

From that moment she changed her life. She cast at her feet those things which had hitherto nourished her vanity, and gave herself to God without reserve. She is now a great Saint in Heaven, reaping in joy what she sowed in tears, an example, a warning, an encouragement to all who live among the temptations of this vale of tears.

My child, one of the easiest ways to obtain true contrition is to meditate on the sufferings of Our Lord, and to call to mind the share you yourself had in inflicting them. *Histoires Édifiantes*, p. 120.

GOD'S INFINITE MERCY.

The mercy of God is great above all His works. Where the true love of God is, there also is true contrition.

The Blessed Curé of Ars continually spoke of God's mercy, that he might bring sinners to repentance. He used to say: "There are some people who say that God is too severe. Oh, how much these deceive themselves! The Eternal Father, in order to

disarm His infinite justice, gave to His Divine Son a heart exceedingly tender. Our Lord, in His prayer to His Heavenly Father, said : ' Father, forgive them.'

" Our Lord did indeed suffer more than was necessary to obtain our salvation. He would in this way have satisfied the justice of His Father, but He would not have satisfied His love.

" It is not God Who condemns us to Hell ; it is our sins. The lost souls do not blame God ; they blame themselves. ' I have lost God,' they say ; ' I have lost my soul, I have lost Heaven, but it is entirely my own fault.' No one was ever lost because he had done too much evil, but many are lost even for one mortal sin because they would not repent.

" If a lost soul could say even once : ' O my God, I love Thee !' there would no longer be Hell for him. But, alas ! poor soul, he has now lost the power of loving which he once had, and which he did not make use of. Never can that soul find peace, never again be happy, because he cannot love.

" Hell itself has its existence from the love of God. The lost souls cry out : ' Oh, if God had not loved us so much we should suffer less, and this punishment would be more supportable ! But to have been so much loved ! What grief ! what self-reproaches !'

" Our faults are as grains of sand when placed by the side of the great mountain of the mercies of the good God.

" The mercies of God are like a torrent which is overflowing—it carries everything along with it.

" The good God would forgive a repentant sinner with more haste than a mother would draw out her little child who had fallen into the fire.

" Imagine a mother who should be compelled to be the executioner of her own child and put it to death. Such is it with God when He sees Himself compelled to condemn a sinner to the flames of Hell."

Blessed Curé d Ars.

III. Of Contrition which is not Sincere.

The only sorrow that will obtain for us from God His mercy and forgiveness is a " hearty " sorrow, a sorrow which must come sincerely from our hearts, and must not consist in words only. Our words may indeed deceive men sometimes, but cannot deceive God, Who knows " even our most secret thoughts."

HE WAS NOT SINCERELY SORRY.

There was a certain man in Paris who did not lead a good life. While he was in good health he daily added sin to sin, and banished from his mind all thought of death and judgment.

But when he became ill, and saw that he was soon to die, he entered into himself and made a confession of his whole life, with many tears flowing from his eyes. Then he received the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction with every outward mark of piety, and gently breathed his last.

People were glad when they heard of how he had repented before his death. They said : " That was indeed a fortunate man, for he enjoyed the pleasures

of this world, and had also by a happy death secured for himself the glory of Heaven."

But man sees only what happens outwardly ; God beholds all that passes in man's heart. A few days after his death he appeared to a holy servant of God, and said to him : " Do not pray for me, for I am in Hell."

" What !" exclaimed the holy man ; " did you not confess your sins with sorrow ? and did you not receive the Last Sacraments with devotion ?"

" It is true," replied the lost soul, " I did confess my sins, but I did not hate them as I ought to have done. I even thought to myself that if I recovered I might with pleasure do them again. God does not pardon sins unless one hates them above all other evils. I did indeed hate and detest my sins with my lips, but not in my heart, and I was not forgiven. I am lost for ever." Saying this, he disappeared.

O my child, hate sin, then, as it is the greatest evil in the world, because it offends God, and brings eternal ruin to all who yield to it.

ANTIOCHUS, KING OF SYRIA.

Antiochus, King of Syria, having learned that the Jews had defeated his army in Judea, became very angry, and determined to proceed at once to Jerusalem that he might destroy that city along with its inhabitants.

Gathering together the chiefs of his army, he gave orders that they should set out immediately ; he himself mounted his chariot to accompany them.

On the way, as they were rushing forward with an alarming rapidity, the chariot was overturned

and Antiochus was thrown out. His generals at once came to his assistance, and raised him from the ground; but his body was all bruised and broken, and very soon signs of corruption began to be manifest.

When he saw the terrible condition to which he was reduced, he entered into himself and began to repent of his many past crimes. "It is just to be subject to God," he cried out, "and that a mortal man should not equal himself to God" (2 Machab. ix. 12).

Then, remembering the crimes he had committed, he became very sad, and, calling together his friends, he said to them: "Sleep is gone from my eyes, and I am fallen away, and my heart is cast down from anxiety. And I said in my heart, 'Into how much tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am: I that was pleasant and beloved in my power!' But now I remember the evils that I have done in Jerusalem, from whence also I took away all the spoils of gold, and of silver that were in it, and I sent to destroy the inhabitants of Juda without cause. I know therefore that for this cause these evils have found me: and behold I perish with grief in a strange land" (1 Machab. vi. 10).

Then he promised that if God would only restore him to health, he would repair all the evil he had done to the people of Jerusalem, and make them equal to the Athenians, the most noble people of the earth. "The holy Temple also," continues the Sacred Scripture, "which before he had spoiled, he promised to adorn with goodly gifts, and to multiply the holy vessels, and to allow out of his revenues

the charges pertaining to the sacrifices. Yea also, that he would become a Jew himself, and would go through every place of the earth, and declare the power of God " (2 Machab. ix. 16).

This was certainly, as far as man could judge, a beautiful example of repentance, but it was of no avail with God. God did not forgive him. The Holy Scripture finishes this history in these words : " And this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of Whom he was not to obtain mercy. . . . Thus the murderer and the blasphemer, being grievously struck, as himself had treated others, died a miserable death in a strange country among the mountains " (*ibid.*, 13-27).

Antiochus was not forgiven because his sorrow was not sincere.

Learn, then, my child, that no matter how strong may be the protestations of repentance the sinner makes, they are of no use before God unless they come from the inmost heart.

IV. Of Contrition which is Sincere.

Sincere contrition is that sorrow which is caused, not so much by the injury it does to ourselves as by that which it does to God. Hence, my child, you so often say to God : " O my God, I am very sorry that I have sinned against Thee, because Thou art so good."

ST. PETER'S SORROW.

When St. Peter had denied Our Blessed Lord for the third time, he at the same moment remembered

the words of Jesus, and, going out of the place, he wept bitterly. He knew in his heart that he was forgiven, because he knew the loving-kindness of the heart of his Divine Master, and he was assured by Our Lord Himself, after His resurrection, that his great sin had been blotted out. Yet we read in his life that, until the day of his martyrdom, more than thirty years afterwards, he never ceased to weep for his sin ; and it is recorded of him that this continual weeping caused two great furrows to be formed on his cheeks from the unceasing tears that flowed from his eyes. *From his Life.*

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA.

Many of you have heard of a great sinner who became a great Saint—St. Margaret of Cortona. She lived in Italy in the thirteenth century.

She was endowed in a high degree with the dangerous gift of beauty, and this was the cause of her ruin. For a young gentleman became enamoured of her, and she led a dissolute life with him for a period of nine years.

At that time he went away one day from home, accompanied by a little dog. A few days afterwards the dog returned alone, and showed by its barking and restless movements that something had happened to its master. Margaret went out, and followed the animal ; it led her to a wood far away from her house. Lying in a ditch she saw the dead body of her companion in sin. It emitted a terrible stench, and was hideous to look at, and worms were feeding on the decayed flesh. Frightened at the

sight, she ran away from the spot without casting even a second glance at the awful sight before her.

When she reached her house she began to reflect on her past sinful life. "O my God, my God!" she cried "have pity on me!" She then attired herself in black garments, and went to her father's house, shedding tears of sorrow, and tearing her face with her nails. But her father refused to allow her to enter, and banished her from his sight.

Thus rejected and abandoned by her earthly father she sat down under a fig-tree, and, raising up her eyes to Heaven, said: "O my God, my father in this world has cast me out, but You will not cast me away. You must now be my Father and my Master, and the only object of my love."

In the midst of these pious thoughts Satan, who had been all the time watching her and fearing to lose his prey which he had long ago made himself so sure of, put violent temptations before her mind. He suggested to her that a certain nobleman in the neighbourhood, who did not bear a good reputation, would be glad to receive her into his house. But God had marked her out for Himself, and by His grace she resisted the temptation.

She then prayed to God to show her where He wished her to go, and what He desired her to do, since she had taken the firm resolution of being for ever His. God inspired her to go to a city called Cortona, and to place herself under the direction of the Friars-Minor. Her first request of them was that they might give her the holy habit of the third Order of St. Francis as an outward sign of her re-

pentance. But, fearing that her conversion might not be sincere, and that she might fail in her resolution, they did not at once yield to her petition, but put her on a trial which lasted for three years.

At the end of that time, seeing that she still persevered in her firm resolution, they acceded to her request and admitted her. From that time she increased daily in humility, in austerity, and in every kind of virtue.

She wished, moreover, to be taken to Mont Pulciano, the place which in her younger sinful days she had scandalized by her evil life, that she might there make public reparation for the scandal she had given. But her Confessor refused to permit this ; and for twenty years she persevered in her austere life, and died the death of the just.

If we have ever imitated her by our sins, let us also imitate her by our repentance. HAUTERIVE.

DAVID, THE ROBBER CHIEF.

In Egypt there once lived a man whose name was David. He was the chief of a band of robbers that infested the country, spreading alarm and dismay wherever they went.

One day the thought of the terrible judgments of God upon sinners came into his mind, and filled him with so much fear that he ran immediately to the nearest monastery and asked to be admitted as a monk.

But the Superior, seeing that he was an old man, refused to admit him, because he thought it would be impossible for him to submit to the severe discipline of the house.

David answered : " Nothing will be too difficult for me, because I have come here to do penance."

Yet the Superior would not consent to receive him. David then said to him : " Perhaps you do not know who I am. I am David, the chief of the robbers, whose name spreads terror wherever it is heard, and I have come hither to repent of my evil life. If you do not admit me I shall be obliged to return to the evil life I have led till now, and then I shall die in my sins, and be lost for ever. So I beseech you to admit me, that I may save my soul."

When the Superior heard these words he consented to admit him at least for a time. David without delay began a life of severe penance, asking God's mercy day and night, frequently going to Confession, and shedding tears of sorrow continually. So great were the works of penance he performed that his Superiors often thought that they would hasten his death.

When he had lived in this manner for a few years, an angel of Heaven appeared to him, and said : " David, thy sins are all blotted out."

" O holy angel !" he exclaimed, " how can that be possible, since they were so many and so great ?"

The angel answered : " In order that you may know that my words are true, you shall remain dumb till the day of your death, except on festival days, when you shall receive the use of your speech to sing the praises of God."

All this took place according to the word of the angel. David became a great Saint, and died the death of the just.

From this beautiful example you see that no

matter how great and how many your sins may be, you can obtain pardon for them from our merciful God by being sorry for them and by doing penance.

Turn, then, to Jesus, my child, and tell Him that you are very sorry for having offended Him in the past, and that you will never offend Him again; and, like all those repentant sinners of whom you have read, you will become God's special favourite on earth and His beloved child in Heaven.

EVERY SIN FORGIVEN WITH TRUE REPENTANCE.

There was once a woman whose life was a scandal to all who knew her. One day she was passing through a church to abridge the road to the place whither she was going, when she saw a large multitude of people entering with great haste as if something of unusual importance was about to take place.

Filled with curiosity, she joined the crowd, which at every moment became greater, until the edifice was filled in every part, and she found herself surrounded on all sides, so that, even if she had so desired, it would have been impossible for her to retrace her steps.

In a very short time a venerable missionary appeared and ascended the pulpit. The subject of the sermon he preached was upon the goodness of God towards sinners, and he frequently repeated these words: "My brethren, every sin can be forgiven; God will forgive every sin if only the sinner be truly sorry."

The woman listened with great attention to every word of the sermon, and especially to those she heard him so often repeat. As soon as the sermon

was ended she forced her way through the crowd and drew near to the preacher as he descended the pulpit steps.

She with her hand touched his sleeve, and asked him : " Is it quite true, Father, that God will forgive every sin ?"

" Nothing is more certain, my child," he answered, " if only the sinner be truly sorry."

" But there are many kinds of sinners ; some have done less than others, and some are exceedingly wicked ; does God pardon all without distinction ?"

" Most certainly," replied the Father. " Provided they all detest their sins God will forgive them all without any distinction."

" Would He forgive even me ?—I having during fifteen years lived a sinful life, committing every day enormous crimes."

" Without doubt, my child, God will forgive you if you only repent and be resolved for the future never to sin again."

" If your words are true, Father, be pleased to hear my confession. Appoint any hour which will be most suitable to you, and I will not fail to come."

" I can hear your confession at this very moment. Come at once "—and he pointed out to her where his Confessional was and told her he would be with her in a few moments.

The poor sinner knelt down and poured forth in his ears all the abominations of these many years, and night began to fall before she ended.

Before leaving the Confessional she said to him : " Father, could you conduct me to some place of safety near at hand where I might spend the night,

as I fear that if I returned to my own house at this hour I might be in danger of relapsing into sin by meeting my former companions in evil ?"

The Father answered that it would be difficult for him to do this at that hour, and encouraged her to return home under the protection of God.

Still she was afraid to do this, and preferred to remain all night in the church, that she might the more surely escape all danger.

Early next morning, when the doors of the church were opened, they found her lying lifeless on the ground at the foot of the altar of Our Lady, with her face upon the floor, which was wet with the tears she had shed. She had wept so much and so bitterly for her sins that her heartfelt sorrow had deprived her of life.

The missionary, having been apprized of the event, easily recognized his penitent of the previous evening, and in his heart admired the greatness of the mercy of God. HAUTERIVE, x. 392.

V. A Firm Purpose of Amendment.

A firm purpose of amendment is a resolution to avoid, by the grace of God, not only sin, but also the dangerous occasions of sin. It is the Holy Ghost Himself Who warns us to avoid the dangerous occasion of sin in these words : " He who loveth the danger shall perish in it." We may make most fervently, resolutions to avoid sin ; but unless we also are careful to shun the dangerous occasions of sin, these resolutions will not avail us, so prone are our natural inclinations to evil. O my

child, if you desire to persevere unto the end, watch, as Our Divine Lord continually warns you to do, and shun with all your power these dangerous occasions of sin.

ALWAYS BEGINNING.

There was a poor man who earned his bread for himself and his family by the sweat of his brow. He had a very humble opinion of himself, and never could see any good in what he did. But other people said he was good and pious, and wondered why he always spoke of himself as a useless servant in God's house.

It was his custom to go to hear as many sermons as he could, and every time he went, he took the resolution to *begin* to be good.

Often during the day at his work he would say to himself : " I must begin to be good, and serve God."

He was always beginning. It was the same with him when he was quite a child as it was when he was twenty years older, and even now, when he was advanced in years, he was still *beginning* to serve God. He thought himself unworthy of going to the Sacraments, still he went often, and each time that he received his Divine Lord in Holy Communion he promised Him to *begin* now to love Him

Old age came on at last, and he lay on his death-bed. When the priest came to give him the last Sacraments, he found him trembling with fear.

" My child," said the priest, " why are you afraid

—you who have served God so well all your lifetime ?"

" Father," he replied, " I wish I had served God as I ought to have done ; pray to God to spare me yet a while, that I may *begin* at last to serve Him."

The priest, who knew how innocent and pious his life had been, consoled him by telling him of the goodness of his Heavenly Father, who would accept the desire he had of pleasing Him. And God Himself seemed at that last moment to give him consolation, by showing him that his whole life had been spent in pleasing Him, because he had always had the desire of doing it, and strove to do it as well as he could. He died very calmly, and his last breath was a prayer of resignation to the Holy Will of God.

Let us also be always *beginning* to be good. Every time we go to Confession let us say to ourselves : " This time I am resolved to *begin* to serve God as I ought." If we persevere in doing this all our lifetime, we may hope that our death also will be a happy one. *Hortus Pastorum.*

But in this you must not trust to your own strength. You must humbly ask God to give you His grace. Many who have taken firm resolutions to serve God have broken them because they trusted to their own strength, and did not ask God to help them.

ST. PETER'S FIRM RESOLUTION.

On the night before Our Lord's death on the Cross, when He was sitting along with His disciples at the Last Supper, He foretold to them that they

would all desert Him and be scandalized in Him that night.

When St. Peter heard these words he at once exclaimed : " Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized. Lord," he continued, " I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death."

But Jesus said : " Amen I say to thee, to-day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice."

But he spoke the more vehemently : " Although I should die together with Thee, I will not deny Thee."

Yet, as Our Lord had foretold, St. Peter denied Him three times and even swore that he did not know Him.

What was the cause of St. Peter's fall ? Was it because his resolution was not firm ? No, it was because he trusted to his own strength, and thought that he could of himself keep his good resolution. O my good child, learn from this example not to trust to yourself, but entirely to God, and you will then keep your good resolution.

THE STORY ST. BERNARD TOLD.

In St. Bernard's life we read the following story :

There was a certain young man who was continually, day after day, falling into a certain sin. It was a sin of thought.

Every time he went to Confession he had the same sin to tell.

At last he got disheartened, and said to himself :

"I will not go to Confession any more! Of what use is it for me to go? Week after week it is always the same. Still, if I do not go, what an awful eternity I am preparing for myself."

Whilst these thoughts were in his mind he went to St. Bernard, and opened his heart to him, and asked him his advice.

"My child," he said, "your state is certainly a deplorable one; but you have no one to blame but yourself. You fall into these faults again and again, because you do not adopt the proper means to keep out of them. Now I will tell you what you will do. You will make a resolution to abstain from falling into these sins for three days in honour of the Most Holy Family, and of the Passion and death of Our Divine Lord; for when you keep before your mind the sufferings and death of Jesus, you will certainly not fall. Then come back to me."

At the end of three days the man came back. There was joy in his countenance, a sign that he had not fallen this time.

St. Bernard said to him: "I see you have been faithful this time; now go again and resolve to avoid sin for three days in honour of Our Blessed Lady, and at the end of three days to come back to me again."

The man promised, and at the end of three days he returned again with the good news that he had not relapsed. St. Bernard then advised him to follow the same method constantly, each third day changing his intention in honour of his guardian Angel or some Saint, and go frequently to Confession.

The man followed this advice, and never again relapsed.

The same means would certainly produce the same effects on ourselves if we tried it.

"I WOULD SOONER DIE THAN COMMIT ONE MORTAL SIN."

A young girl, who was only about twelve years of age, had just made her First Communion. As she had taken the resolution to go to the Sacraments frequently to obtain grace to preserve her innocence, she began this pious practice immediately.

Her Confessor one day said to her : "My dear child, I have confidence in God that by His mercy you are at the present moment agreeable to Him, but you are young yet, and who can tell that you may not, as you advance in age, offend Him by a grievous sin ?"

"Do not be afraid, my Father," she replied, "for I would sooner die than commit one mortal sin."

"If you sincerely desire this great favour, ask Our Blessed Lady to obtain it for you, that in the day of temptation you may be preserved from offending God."

The girl, going up to the altar of Mary, knelt piously before the holy image, and besought, with all the fervour of her heart, that she, "the Help of Christians," might obtain for her the grace of dying in her innocence rather than be exposed to the danger of offending God by a mortal sin.

When she returned to her Father Confessor and related to him what she had done, he said to her

" My child, have confidence in Our Lady, for she will watch over you in the hour of danger."

Not many days afterwards a little swelling appeared on her cheek. At first no one imagined that it was of a serious nature. But very soon it developed into a tedious cancer, which began to eat away the flesh around it. In less than twenty days it was evident that no human skill could effect a cure, or even prolong life much longer. The pain that arose from the developing wound caused her to suffer great agony, but she bore it all with an edifying patience ; and when the hour of her death came soon afterwards, she joyfully resigned her soul into the hands of God, being persuaded that her death was a sign that through her Heavenly Mother's prayers He had taken her out of this world, " lest wickedness should alter her understanding or deceit beguile her soul " (Wisdom iv. 11).

Souvenirs de la I^me^ Com., p. 121.

ST. JEROME AND ST. PAULA, WIDOW.

St. Paula, after the death of her husband, left her own country and went to the Holy Land, where she took up her abode, in order that she might spend the rest of her life in contemplation in the very place where Jesus lived and died, and in works of penance and mortification.

St. Jerome tells us that she wept bitterly for the sins of her past life, even for those that were venial and that her eyes had become true fountains of tears. Every time that she knelt before her Crucifix abundant tears of love and sorrow flowed down her cheeks.

When the Saint suggested to her that so much weeping might endanger her health, she would answer : " I weep for the sins I have committed in the past ; there is no evil in the world comparable to the evil of sin. It is, then only just that my tears should disfigure my countenance, since, in former times, it was the cause of so much vanity, and that I should mortify my body, which was the cause of my so often offending God.

"Permit, therefore, my tears to flow, that they may efface the laughter I so often joined in amidst the vain follies of my life, and allow me to wear the sackcloth of penance to replace the rich and magnificent garments I used to wear. At that time I desired to please the world and my husband ; now my only desire is to make myself pleasing to my beloved Spouse and Saviour, Jesus."

VI. On Avoiding the Occasions of Sin.

As long as we are in this life, and although we may have served God faithfully for many years, even to an advanced age, we are not even then sure of obtaining in Heaven the reward we have merited. It is not those who have persevered in His service for a long time—even a very long time—that are to receive the reward, but those only who shall persevere to the end. So, with fear and trembling, all your lifetime, my child, work out your salvation, and be particularly careful to avoid every dangerous occasion of sin.

THE OLD MAN'S FALL.

The Abbot Elias was eighty years old, and had lived all those years in the practice of heroic virtues, when one day someone who had heard of his great sanctity came to visit him in his desert home. During the time when they were conversing together there came into his mind a temptation to do what was very sinful. The old man, thinking that, since he had served God so long and so faithfully, there was no danger for him, neglected to ask God to help him, and to go away from the occasion of sin. He left his cell to commit the sin Satan had put in his mind to do. But as he was passing the threshold, behold, an angel of God stood before him, and, with a terrible countenance, said to him: "Woe to the man who sets his heart on human things, and who, for the sake of earthly love, forsakes his God."

Elias was filled with intense fear at the words of the angel, and immediately saw the terrible pit into which he had fallen. Overcome with remorse, he wept bitterly for his sin, and going into his cell, he prostrated himself on the ground, asking God to have mercy on him. The angel raised him up, saying: "Take courage, Elias, and hope in the mercy of God, Who never rejects the earnest prayer of the penitent sinner."

Saying this the angel disappeared, and Elias, comforted by these words of hope, spent the few years that remained to him on earth in works of penance, and when the hour of death came he threw himself into the arms of his Heavenly Father with the confidence of the prodigal son when he knelt at his father's feet.

JOSEPH IN DANGER.

The patriarch Joseph, when a young man, was one day, without any fault on his part, in a dangerous occasion of sin. Someone came up to him suddenly, and asked him to do what would offend God. Joseph saw the danger at once, and, without as much as speaking, ran off as fast as he could. The tempter ran after him and seized him by the coat to bring him back. But Joseph, throwing off his coat, ran away, leaving it in the hands of the person who was tempting him, and in this way he escaped the danger.

O my child, how many have fallen into sin because, instead of flying away as Joseph did, they remained in the danger. Be not foolish like them, but rather imitate the Saints who are now safe with God because they always ran away when they saw themselves in danger of offending Him.

VII. On Keeping away from Bad Company.

My child, there are millions and millions of souls in Hell who would now be in Heaven had it not been for bad company. How many children who at present love God with their whole hearts will be lost for all eternity because of bad company ! Oh, then, read attentively the following words, that you may always keep away from bad companions, and one day be in Heaven with God.

THE DYING LADY.

There was once a young lady who was pious and good, and shunned vice of all kinds. She was

careful to go with no companion who did wrong, and everyone said she was an excellent Christian.

But she had her defects, and one of these was that she was a little vain, and was pleased when she heard herself admired. Those who were her constant companions, although virtuous, were, like herself, fond of the admiration and praise of others, and their conversation was more frequently of worldly things, dress, and amusements than of the things which alone deserve the attention of a child of God.

It happened that the young lady became very ill, and it was evident to all that the days of her life were coming to an end. Like a good Christian, she received the news of her approaching end with resignation, and prepared for it with fervour and piety.

Her companions came every day to visit her, because they all loved her. One day she said to them : " My friends, we have lived together for a long time, and you have been my constant companions, but your company has not done me any good, and I wish now that you had been very different from what you are. I am now about to leave this world, and to give an account to God of all those vain words and actions in which we spent so much of our time. Take my advice, then ; it is that of a loving companion who is dying : Shun the company of those who are vain, proud, and worldly, for Satan can drag souls into Hell by that kind of company, as well as by the company of those who openly sin against God. My last request is that you should pray for me, that God may forgive me the

sins I have committed by all those vain, foolish, and worldly words and deeds of which we have so often been guilty."

"WHO ARE YOUR FRIENDS ?"

There is a saying which is always found to be true ; it is this : " Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are."

If you were always working with sweeps you would soon get black like them ; if you were always working with millers you would soon be all white like them ; if you are always with bad companions you will soon be bad like them.

Let your friends, therefore, be good friends, pious friends, whose sweet little habits of piety will coax you to devotion also, and whose bright example will draw you on to Jesus.

VIII. What must be Done when One has Fallen into Sin.

My child, if you have already had the misfortune of committing a grievous sin, God has given you in the Sacrament of Penance the means of being freed from it. Go, then, to this Sacrament, that you may be delivered from this, the most dreadful of all evils.

"MY FATHER, I OWE YOU MY LIFE."

It was in the year 1590 ; Father Anchieta was passing through the wilds of the New World, preaching the Gospel to the savage tribes of those newly-discovered regions.

One day, as he was going through a lonely place in a great forest, he heard a confused noise, which seemed to be made up of wild songs, the beating of drums, and the wailings of someone in great distress. He went to the top of a neighbouring height to see what it meant. To his great horror he saw a poor prisoner lying bound in the midst of a crowd of savages, who were preparing to kill him, that they might feast on his flesh.

Already everything was ready. A fire was burning on the ground, and the chief stood clothed in his festive robes, with a sharp knife in his hand, which he was about to plunge into the heart of their poor shrieking victim.

When the priest saw this, he knew that he had no time to lose. He rushed down upon them from the hill on which he stood, before they had time to discover whence he came, and, making a way for himself through the crowd, cried out in a voice of thunder, "Stop!" At the same time he looked on them with eyes sparkling with fire, which frightened them.

When he saw that his presence had made them for a moment desist from their cruel sacrifice, he seized a knife that lay near, and cutting asunder the cords that bound the poor man, carried him off without any opposition. The savages stood as if paralyzed; so great was their awe at the bold stranger, and their fear when they saw his great strength.

When the poor Indian saw that he had been saved from death and freed from the hands of his enemies, he threw himself on the ground, and seizing the feet of his liberator, embraced them with every sign

of the deepest gratitude. " My Father," he cried out in the language of his country, " you have saved my life ; you have delivered me from the very jaws of death."

The good man was afterwards instructed in the truths of our holy Faith, and received Baptism. To the end of his life he never ceased thanking God for his twofold deliverance from a temporal and an eternal death.

The blessing of being freed from the death of sin in the Sacrament of Penance is infinitely greater than that which the poor savage received in being freed from a temporal one. So much the greater, then, ought to be our gratitude to God.

SCHOUPPE : *Instruct.*

" RISE AGAIN."

A hermit, having fallen through human frailty into several faults, went to Silöe, one of the great Fathers of the desert, to ask him what he should do.

" My child," he answered, " you must rise again from your fall."

" But, my Father, I have already done so, and I have fallen again."

" Well, just rise again once more."

" And how often must I thus rise again ?"

" As often as you fall," replied the Father. " Rise again always as long as you live, and when the hour of your death comes, it will find you either standing or lying down, and carry before you in that position before the sovereign tribunal of God."

May God grant, my child, that when that terrible

messenger comes to you, he will find you standing, that is, in the grace of God, for your sentence then will be that of the just.

A GOOD RESOLUTION AND ITS RESULTS.

A young boy, who had made his First Communion only a few months previously, had been sent by his parents as an apprentice to a trade they had chosen for him.

On the day of his First Communion he had taken one great resolution, which at all hazards he was resolved to keep. It was this : " If by some great misfortune I should happen to fall into a mortal sin, I will go to Confession before I retire to rest on that very same day."

This misfortune did occur. It was on a Saturday, and the weather was exceedingly stormy ; moreover, the priest lived at a considerable distance from the place where he dwelt.

The tempter, who had been the occasion of his fall, suggested to him that he might easily delay his visit to the priest for a few days, considering he dwelt at such a distance and the weather was so unpropitious.

But suddenly recalling to mind his promise, he seemed to hear deep down in his soul a voice—perhaps it might have been that of his angel guardian —which urged him to go immediately : " Go to Confession at once : do as you promised."

For a moment he hesitated, but only for a moment. Falling down on his knees, he said a " Hail Mary," to obtain the grace of knowing the Will of God, and of following it.

His short prayer ended, he rose from his knees and set out for the church.

On his return he met his godmother, who inquired of him where he had been. He told her all, with joy on his countenance. " I could not go to sleep," he said, " until I had become reconciled to God."

His mother was accustomed on Sunday morning to allow her children a longer time for repose than on other days. According to her custom she went to the door of the little room in which he slept to awake him. A quarter of an hour afterwards she went again to see if he had risen ; she knocked again, but received no answer. She then opened the door, and found him still in bed, asleep, as she thought.

" Rise quickly, you lazy boy," she said, as she approached the bed. " It is half-past seven o'clock. Are you not ashamed to——"

But seeing that he heeded her not, she took his hands within her own : they were cold. With terror she looked more closely at him. This look told her all. She screamed and fell on the floor insensible.

The child was dead, and his body was already cold.

How fortunate for him that he had not delayed going to Confession !

O my child, learn from this example never to delay one instant returning to God if by misfortune a mortal sin has separated you from Him. Make immediately an act of contrition, and go to Confession as soon as possible.

Motifs de Persévérance, 30.

XLV

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE: CONFESSION

I. What Confession Is.

Confession is to accuse ourselves of our sins to a priest approved by the Bishop.

My child, there are, alas! many Christians who have not kept unstained the robe of their Baptism, because they have by their sins offended God, and have broken the promises they then made to Him.

The temptations of this world are so strong, and we are so weak when left to ourselves, that many fail on the day of trial, and even commit mortal sins because, when tempted, they neglected to ask God to help them.

But God, Who is infinitely merciful, has instituted the Sacrament of Penance, in which, by a good Confession accompanied by sincere sorrow, we can obtain His forgiveness and once more become His beloved children.

THE RULER'S DAUGHTER.

The following example is taken from the fifth chapter of St. Mark's Gospel:

"And there cometh one of the rulers of the

synagogue, named Jairus, and seeing Jesus, falleth down at His feet ; and he besought Him much, saying, ' My daughter is at the point of death ; come, lay Thy hand upon her, that she may be safe and may live !' And He went with him, and a great multitude followed Him. . . .

" While He was yet speaking some come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, ' Thy daughter is dead : why dost thou trouble the Master any farther ?'

" But Jesus having heard the word that was spoken, said to the ruler of the synagogue, ' Fear not, only believe.'

" And they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue ; and He seeth a tumult and people weeping and wailing much : and going in, He saith to them, ' Why make ye this ado and weep ? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.' And they laughed Him to scorn.

" But He, having put them all out, taketh the father and mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And taking the damsel by the hand, He saith to her, ' Talitha cumi,' which is, being interpreted, ' Damsel, I say to thee, arise.'

" And immediately the damsel rose up and walked : and she was twelve years old : and they were astonished with a great astonishment."

Perhaps, my child, you may be about the age of that little girl whom Jesus raised from the dead. Perhaps, also, your soul may be dead in mortal sin. But Jesus has come now to raise you up from that death of sin, and to give back life to your soul. He

is even now saying to you the same words He formerly said to that young girl : " My child, I say to thee, arise !" Be sorry for your sins and resolve with the help of His grace never to die again by committing a mortal sin.

THE WOLF AND THE CHILD.

A furious wolf once came into a country place in the South of France, devouring everything. Finding on its way a little boy, two years old, it seized him in its mouth and carried him off ; but some men who were working near at hand ran to attack it, and snatched the little child from it ; and the child was saved.

In the Sacrament of Penance, my child, Jesus Himself comes, and by His power snatches you from the jaws of Satan, in which so many fall by yielding to sin.

THE VISION AT THE CONFESSIONAL.

One day a servant of God was praying in the church at a time when many people were going to Confession. He saw them going into the Confessional one by one, and coming out after they had made their Confession.

God at the same time opened his eyes that he might see the state of the soul of each of these people. He saw some going in whose souls seemed black and ugly ; they came out white and beautiful. These were they who had gone in to Confession with mortal sin on their souls, and had come out forgiven.

He saw others going in black, and come out still blacker and more hideous. These were the sinners who had made bad Confessions.

Others again he saw who entered the Confessional white and beautiful, and came out shining with greater beauty and splendour. These were they who had not committed any grievous crime, but in whose souls there were venial faults ; they had by virtue of the sacramental grace given by absolution obtained pardon for them, and an increase of grace which made them more and more beautiful before God.

THE BROKEN EGGS MADE WHOLE AGAIN.

St. Peter Claver, of the Society of Jesus, and the apostle of the slaves of Carthagena, had received from God the gift of miracles which he made use of for the consolation of the poor negroes amongst whom he lived.

One day about the year 1630 it happened that a young negress was on her way to the market, carrying in her hands a basketful of eggs which she intended to sell. A young Spaniard met her on the way, and from some unknown reason went up to her and struck her on the face. This cruel action caused her to let fall the basket, and the eggs were all broken. Severe as the blow was which she had received, she felt the loss of her eggs more acutely still, for she had lost in an instant all that she possessed for her support.

In a very short time a multitude of people had gathered round her, being brought thither by her cries ; among these was St. Peter Claver.

The holy man was filled with compassion, and by kind words endeavoured to comfort the poor negress. "Gather up these eggs again and put them in your basket," he said to her.

"How can I do that," she replied, "since they are all broken?"

Without answering he began gently to push them near to her feet with the staff he carried in his hand, and as the staff touched them, they one by one became whole and sound as before the accident. The negress was amazed, and thought that the holy man must be a great Saint to be able to perform such a wonderful thing. She turned round to thank him, but he had disappeared.

The same wonderful thing takes place every day in this world, and even perhaps within ourselves, and yet there are many who take no notice of it. When a person has fallen into mortal sin, and afterwards makes a good Confession, his soul is restored to the condition in which it was before the sin was committed, and becomes sometimes even more beautiful.

II. The Happiness of Receiving the Sacrament of Penance Worthily.

My child, the Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ all His lifetime went about doing good. He cured those who were sick; He raised the dead to life; He consoled those who suffered, and, above all, tried to bring back those who had gone astray in sin. Read the following example:

THE LEPER CLEANSED.

Jesus had just finished His beautiful sermon on the mountain, and had come down to the plain beneath, followed by the crowd of people who had been listening to Him. "And behold," says St. Matthew, "a leper came and adored Him, saying, 'Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean.' And Jesus, stretching forth His hand, touched him, saying, 'I will; be thou made clean.' And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed."

Our Lord, in the Sacrament of Penance, continues, by the ministry of His priests, to cleanse us from a worse leprosy than that with which the poor man was afflicted—the leprosy of sin. How grateful we should be to Him for His goodness and love for us!

JESUS' LOVE FOR POOR SINNERS.

One day, when Blessed Angela of Foligno was suffering great pain, and was trying to bear it patiently for the love of Jesus, He appeared to her nailed to the Cross. Showing her His body, all covered with wounds from which issued blood, He said to her: "Look at Me, My child, and tell Me if you could ever do, for the love of Me, anything that could equal what I have done through love for you."

Now Jesus suffered for you as well as for her, my child; so if your conscience reproaches you with having turned your back upon Jesus by sin, arise at once and go back to your Father by making a good Confession; He will receive you with joy, and will cleanse you from your sins.

THE OFFICER AT THE SERMON.

There was once an officer of a cavalry regiment, an old man, who had passed his whole life in the neglect of his religious duties.

One day, while passing through a certain town, he was informed that there was a great preacher there giving a mission. He had often heard of this good Father, but he had never heard him preach, so he was glad of the present opportunity. He went one evening to the church; the sermon was on the necessity of making a good Confession, and on the peace and joy which come to the soul after one has made a sincere and good Confession.

The old man, while listening to the eloquent words of the preacher, thought of the miserable condition in which he himself was at that moment, and his mind was filled with a feeling of fear; so, when the Father came down from the pulpit, he said to him: "Father, I want to speak to you; could I go with you just now?"

"Yes, come with me," and he led him into the sacristy, which was near at hand.

"Father," he began, "I want to go to Confession; you said in your sermon that nothing can equal the joy that comes to the soul of one who makes a good Confession. Now I do not feel happy, but I desire with all my heart to begin to serve God."

The priest led him at once to the Confessional, and he made his Confession in sentiments of great contrition. While he was making his Confession it seemed to him as if a heavy burden was taken off his shoulders, and when he had received absolution

he felt so happy that tears of joy flowed in abundance from his eyes. "O my God!" he exclaimed, "I never could have imagined it possible that one could feel so happy ; this is indeed the happiest day of my whole life."

Next day he went to visit some of his military acquaintances. "Listen to me, my comrades," he said ; "I never in all my life tasted so much real joy and happiness as I have done since I became reconciled to God ; I am certain that the King himself cannot be so happy as I am this day. I advise you, then, to do as I have done, and you will see that what I have said is true."

We do not know if they followed his advice, but do you, my child, follow it if your conscience makes you feel unhappy, and, like him, you will experience that joy which the apostle says surpasses all understanding.

III. The Examination of Conscience.

My child, when you are preparing for Confession, the first thing you must do is to carefully examine your conscience.

Now to examine your conscience means to try and call to mind all the sins you have committed against God, or your neighbour, or yourself in thoughts, words, or deeds, or by omission since your last good Confession, and the number of times these sins, if grievous, have been committed, as far as it is in your power to remember them ; and for this purpose it is necessary that you should ask God to help you.

JOY OF A HOLY MONK AT DEATH.

St. Alphonsus recommends every good Christian to make an examination of conscience every night before retiring to rest, and of making a sincere act of contrition, and assures us that this is a devotion which will give us great consolation at the hour of death.

It is related that a certain devout monk, when at the point of death, was told by his Superior to prepare for Confession.

"Blessed be God," he answered, "I have for the past thirty years made an examination of conscience every night, and I always make my Confession as if I were at the point of death."

How happy are those, my child, who imitate his beautiful example!

THE THREE PROCESSIONS FROM THE CONFESSIONAL.

St. Benedict Joseph Labré recommended the practice of frequent Confession as the surest means of living in the friendship of God. "But," he added, "be sure that you make good Confessions, because an immense multitude of souls are lost for all eternity because of bad Confessions.

"Among those who go to Confession," he continues, "there are three kinds of people: those who make good Confessions, those who make them carelessly, and those who make bad ones. As soon as people come forth from the Confessional, they form themselves into three distinctly different processions,

and walk along paths which are very different the one from the other.

" The first procession is composed of true penitents ; that is to say, of those who, when preparing to approach the tribunal of penance, have diligently examined their consciences that they might discover the sins by which they have offended God, who have in Confession made a sincere declaration of these sins, and have been penetrated with heartfelt sorrow for having offended so good a God, and so affectionate a Father, and who, moreover, are resolved to make satisfaction to God's offended justice, not only by performing sincerely the penance enjoined in Confession, but by adding other works of penance which it may be in their power to perform, and by gaining the indulgences granted by the Church for the remission of the temporal punishment yet due.

" If these holy penitents persevere in these works of satisfaction, when they reach the end of their pilgrimage on earth they will be immediately put in possession of the glory of Heaven. But the number of these true penitents is very small.

" The second procession consists of those penitents who are imperfect, and their number also is limited. There has been nothing really essential wanting either in their examination of conscience, which was diligently made, nor in their contrition, which was supernatural and sincere, nor in their Confession, which was exact. But because they are cowardly and do not perform voluntary penances, nor many good works, nor gain the indulgences within their power, they die, it is true, in the grace of God, but cannot

at once obtain possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, because they have yet much to suffer to satisfy the justice of God.

"At the moment of their departure from this life these souls obtain a vision of God and from that moment their one desire is to be ever with Him; but as nothing stained can enter these most holy tabernacles, that most beautiful Heaven, that place which has been prepared for them, must for a long time, perhaps, be left empty, and they must suffer in the flames of Purgatory to blot out those stains which they, while on earth, neglected to wash out by works of penance.

"Lastly, the third procession is composed of false penitents, and their number is very great. The remedy the mercy of God placed at their disposal to obtain His grace and pardon, has become for them, by their own fault a fatal poison, and they walk on the path which will lead them to everlasting death. In the bottomless pit they will, for all eternity, bewail their error. They will then see that what God had ordained for their salvation they have made use of for their destruction.

"Throughout all eternity they will cry out in their despair: 'Why did I not more carefully examine my conscience? Why did I not accuse myself more exactly? Why was I so remiss in making my acts of contrition? Why did I neglect to do penance?'"

These are the words which that great Saint who who is called "the poor man of Christ" so often uttered in his zeal for the conversion of sinners, and in his desire that every one should make good Confessions.

From his Life.

IV. The Happy Consequences of Making a Good Confession.

My child, there are many things in this life that bring happiness to our souls. God, in His Fatherly affection for us, has so ordained it, in order that we may more frequently think of Him, and more fervently love Him. But of all these sources of happiness, there is not one that can in any way be compared with a tranquil conscience. St. Paul calls it a peace which surpasseth all understanding. And this peace and happiness is gained in the highest degree by a good Confession.

PEACE THROUGH THE TRUTH.

The great Châteaubriand relates the following story in the history of his own life :

" My Confessor, who was the Superior of a certain religious order, was about fifty years old, and of a stern disposition. Every time I went to Confession he asked me many things, with the desire that my Confessions should be good.

" The faults I accused myself of were very little ones, so much so that the good priest was surprised. I was to make my First Communion on Holy Thursday. The nearer the day came the more anxiously did my Confessor ask me questions. ' Are you not concealing some sin ?' he would ask. ' No, my Father,' I said. ' Did you not commit such and such a fault ?' ' No, my Father.' I always answered him in these words. When I rose up to leave him he always seemed to be doubtful, and I used to think I saw his lips moving as if in prayer for me.

"On Wednesday evening I was to receive absolution. At three o'clock that afternoon I was in the church. When I went to the Confessional my knees trembled under me. I knelt down at the priest's feet. I began. I said something, and then became silent as if I had nothing more to add. He asked me once more: 'Are you sure, my child, that you have not left out something?' I did not answer. He asked me again. Instantly I replied, as I had done before: 'No, Father.'

"He sat in silence for a moment praying to his Master above for grace and counsel. Then raising his hand, he said: 'My child, I am now going to give you absolution.'

"At these words it seemed to me as if the thunders of Heaven had fallen on me. 'Stop,' I cried, 'stop; I have not told you all!'

"At these words he gently said to me: 'Courage then, my child; tell me now all that is in your heart.'

"I did so. It was all over in a moment, and it seemed as if a mountain had been lifted off my shoulders. A few words of consolation and advice followed; then he pronounced the holy words of absolution. I felt within me the happiness of an angel. I was so joyful that I seemed to fly rather than walk.

"Next day I made my First Communion. My clothes were perhaps not so rich as those of my companions, but I did not perceive it. I felt that day that I belonged to God, and that God was with me."

O my child, blessed and happy indeed is the soul

that is pure and free from sin ; nothing on earth can indeed be compared to the joy of a heart full of the peace of God.

THE DYING OFFICER.

An officer named Coué was dangerously wounded in one of the battles fought in the Crimea, and it was evident to everyone that the hand of Death was upon him ; he himself did not fail to see that his end was near.

" I am dying," he exclaimed ; " my weakness, which is increasing at every moment, tells me that my last hour is at hand. Go immediately and bring the chaplain, that I may become reconciled to God before I die."

When the priest entered the room, he said to him : " O Father, be pleased to hear my Confession ; it will indeed be a long one, but I desire to die the death of a good Christian, so that when I appear before God there may be nothing found on my soul to endanger its salvation."

When his Confession was ended, and when he had received absolution, a sweet calm shone on his noble countenance, which showed the peace that inwardly reigned in his heart. He soon afterwards expired in sentiments of pious resignation, pressing the Crucifix to his lips. SCHOUPPE, iii. 262.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

In the year 1857, a man who had from his early years lived according to the maxims of our holy Faith, and faithfully fulfilled his religious duties, was walking in the gardens of the Tuileries in Paris, when

he was suddenly accosted by a young man of between thirty-five and forty years of age, who, in a friendly manner, striking him on the shoulders, exclaimed :

" Oh, what a pleasure it is to meet you again after so long a separation ! Do you not know me, your old school-companion ? Oh, I have often thought of you since last we saw each other, and it is truly an unalloyed joy to see you again."

These few words gave the other time to look with leisure on the face of him who spoke, and he soon recognized him.

" Is it possible ?" he exclaimed, in accents of sincere pleasure. " Can this be my dear old friend of days gone by ? It is now, I am sure, twelve years since we separated on our different paths through life. What a number of things have taken place since then, both to you and me ! Come with me, or rather I will accompany you. We have more than one episode to relate.

" And first of all, are you still the good Christian you used to be when a boy, for at that time, if you remember rightly, we were pious, and made good resolutions for our after-life."

" As for that," answered the other, " the less we speak of it the better. I am not a simple child now as I was then ; and I am now no longer a believer in the things that I then believed. I have taken a higher flight, my dear old friend, and I have thrown aside the Confessional and all that kind of thing long ago."

" Well, that information does astonish me, and makes me feel sad. I have ever had the confidence that all our fellow-students, and you especially, had

remained good and fervent Christians. But since I have allowed myself to be deceived in this, let us speak of something else. Give me an account of how you have lived since then, and I will afterwards tell you what has occurred to me."

They soon left the garden, and pursued their way through some of the neighbouring streets, speaking together of the happy days of their childhood, and of many events that had taken place since then.

The one who had neglected to fulfil his religious duties was a man of intelligence, and had studied much. But this only created within him a spirit of pride and self-esteem, and caused him to entertain a high idea of his own accomplishments. He related to his friend, how that after having left the pious house where they had for so long studied together, he had imprudently launched into every kind of society, and imbibed sentiments very different from those he had learned there, and how that his mind was influenced by them in such a manner that he placed no restraint on his passions, and this in the end deprived him of the incomparable gift of the Faith. "And now, at the present day, I believe in nothing," he added. "I have tasted of all the pleasures the world offers to its devotees, and I plunged myself headlong into every kind of disorder. I became more reserved as years passed over me, and my friends began to think that I was changed into a new man. In this they were deceived ; it was all on the exterior ; my heart was as wicked and inconstant as before."

"At least," interposed his friend, "you must have found a certain amount of gratification in

those days, though very different from what you experienced in the happy days of your innocence?"

"Oh no!" he replied, in accents of bitter disappointment; "peace fled from me; and although I sought after it day and night, it seemed to recede farther and farther from me: there was no peace for me. You have obliged me to avow this sad intelligence, an avowal which ten minutes ago would have suffocated me rather than found an utterance. Yes, I have tried, and I repeat this to you again: I have tried every kind of pleasure that came in my way; I refused myself nothing my heart could desire, and, believe me, there was not one of them that gave me so much pleasure as that which I used to feel in singing one verse of the hymns we used to sing together long ago.

"Ah, those happy days!" he added; "those days of piety and simplicity: where are you now? Why did you leave me so soon? I have, many a time—I say this to you in confidence—tried to bring them back to life again, but, alas! in vain. Even only yesterday I went into the Church of St. Thomas of Aquin over there. I wanted to say a little prayer, but I had forgotten how to pray, and I came out, more sorrowful, more miserable, and more desolate than when I entered. And besides, of what use would it be for me to pray? I have no faith; I know not even if the Name of God can suggest anything to my weary soul. Such, my dear old friend, in a few words, is the history of my life since we parted. I can read by your very looks that yours has been very different. What are you doing now? What are now your ideas about religion? What have

you done, and how have you lived since last we spoke together ?"

It was during Holy Week that this encounter took place. His virtuous friend made answer that he was indeed much grieved to see his former happy companion now so sad, whilst he himself enjoyed so much interior peace. " I have always been faithful to my early promises," he answered. " I have lived under the wings of God's protection, and possess that peace of mind which indeed does surpass all understanding. It is true I have had many great battles to fight in my daily conflicts with the powers of evil, but I was always happy, even then, because the grace of God, which I always pray for, was assured to me, and I knew that each victory gained here secures for me a crown of glory hereafter." He then promised his former companion to visit him, took note of his address, and then they parted.

On the evening of Good Friday he felt within him a strong desire to pay the promised visit, at the same time saying to himself that he could not spend the evening of that solemn day in a more advantageous manner. He accordingly set out for the house indicated.

He found his friend even more unhappy than on the previous day, and more unbelieving, if possible, than before. He ceased not to utter blasphemous words against the Gospel, the Church, and the Law of God. It was evident that Satan was assaulting him more terribly than ever, and it seemed at first as if there could not possibly be any escape from the gulf of infidelity into which he had fallen.

" Listen to me," said his visitor, as soon as he had

seated himself beside him ; " I see you are very unhappy to-day. I will say to you in three words all that I intend to utter. I have not come hither to try to convert you, and I am not going to preach a sermon to you ; I want simply to say to you that your sad condition fills me with great pain. I see how unhappy you are to-day, and this makes me still more unhappy, because, being a Christian, I see the awful fate that awaits you, my beloved companion of old, when you pass from this world into the next.

" You may tell me," he continued, " that you do not now believe in Hell, yet I can easily see that you have an intense fear of it—a fear you will not allow yourself to admit. This is a matter of great importance. The very fear within you that " perhaps " there may be a Hell should cause you, who are so sensible a person, to give the thought your most serious consideration. I can see but one remedy, and I ask you not to be angry with me if I suggest to you what that remedy is : it is Confession ; go to Confession."

If a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet, the poor sinner could not have been more terrified. Passion and rage for a time deprived him of speech, and he cast upon his friend a glance of profound disdain.

But this did not intimidate him, and he calmly said again : " Yes, go to Confession, and that, too, without delay. Your own conscience declares to you that this is the remedy, and that you should adopt it. On a day such as this, when Our Lord died on the Cross for the salvation of souls, He bestows on us all special graces. I say it again : go to Confession."

The man, now calmer than at the beginning, replied : " But what is the use of my going to Confession, since I do not believe in it ? Moreover, to whom can I go ? Who would have the patience to listen to me, or to give me the counsels my situation requires ? Oh no, it is useless ; it is impossible !"

His friend answered with emotion : " I tell you you must go to Confession. You will believe when you have shaken off the weight that oppresses you. Your belief of old will rise again from the dead within you, and your former happiness will be restored to you. I know a Confessor who will suit you. You will go to-morrow morning to Father Ravignan, and you go in my name. Now in this matter I will take no refusal ; and I now leave you to your own reflections, and the examination of your conscience. Good-night !"

The following evening, about nine o'clock, a knock was heard at the door of the room in which the pious man lived. It was immediately opened, and the next instant the two friends were folded in each other's arms.

" I have come," said the other, full of joy, " to bless you and to thank you. You have saved me. Yes, you have indeed made of me another man. I went to the house of the Father to whom you directed me, and I laid at his feet all my faults, crimes, and unbelief, and I have brought back with me joy, hope, and happiness. To-morrow morning I am permitted to approach the altar at Notre Dame in the company of so many devout men who annually, on Easter Sunday morning, make open profession of their faith by receiving the Body and Blood of their

Divine Master in Holy Communion. The holy man said that he would perform my penance for me, and that now I should fear no more. O beautiful! O admirable! O sweet institution! the Sacrament of Penance! Yes, my friend, Confession is something Divine, and as you foretold me, it has torn asunder from my heart the veil which had enveloped it in darkness. May God be for ever praised, and may He be pleased to grant that now I may persevere."

Not many days afterwards he resigned a lucrative position in the world to enter the seminary to study for the priesthood, that he might consecrate his new life to God for the salvation of souls.

BLESSED ANGELA.

Blessed Angela was born at Foligno, a town in Italy, in the thirteenth century. She was descended from a noble family, and was married to a rich man belonging to the same place, by whom she had many children.

For many years she had led a careless life, and enjoyed the pleasures of this world without thinking of God. But her Heavenly Father had pity on her and gave her the grace of returning to the path of duty she had left. He also bestowed on her many singular favours for the encouragement of poor sinners, by showing them that, although they may have offended Him by many grievous sins, He will look on them as His most beloved children, if they only return to Him with sincerity. The following is the account she gives of her conversion :

" One day I suffered in my soul a strange feeling to which I was not accustomed, which gave me no

peace : it was continually showing me the greatness and the number of my sins. At the same time, the thought of the terrible punishments that would one day be inflicted on me if I continued to live in that state came before my mind and filled my sinful soul with fear. I could not get the thought of Hell out of my mind. I knew I deserved it, and I resolved to commit no more sin. I even wept bitter tears of sorrow and grief for the sins I had done, and thought how happy I should have been if I had never sinned.

" But one thing frightened me : I knew I could not obtain pardon for these sins unless I went to Confession and confessed them all. But I dared not go, because I was so ashamed to tell what I had done. At length I saw that I could get no peace in my mind until I went. One day I went to Confession, but would to God I had not gone, for I had not the courage to confess my sins ! I made a bad Confession, because I did not declare all my sins as I ought to have done ; and, what was still worse, I went to Holy Communion. This I did not once only, but several times, and each time it seemed more and more difficult to confess my sins.

" But my conscience gave me no peace ; I was most miserable in my mind. I would have given everything I possessed in the world if I could only have got these sins off my mind. God in His mercy was pleased to inspire me with the thought of asking the great St. Francis to help me. I prayed most earnestly to him that he would send me a Confessor who would ask me questions about my past life, and interrogate me about my sins.

" That same night I thought I saw standing near me a venerable old man, who said : ' My sister, if you had only begun to pray long ago you would have long ago received the answer I am come to give you. You shall receive, therefore, the request you have made to me.'

" From these words I knew that this venerable person was no other than the great St. Francis to whom I had prayed

" The following morning, on my way to the church, I overtook a religious who was going to preach that day in the church to which I was going. I followed him into the church, and, during the time he was preaching, I took the resolution of going to Confession to him as soon as he came down from the pulpit. So, when the sermon was over, I followed him, and asked him if he would be so good as hear my Confession. He at once yielded to my request, and I made my Confession. This time it was a good one ; I confessed everything I had ever done in my past life, and before I rose from my knees, I had received absolution.

" I felt very happy now ; but still, it was more for joy that I had been drawn out of the danger of going to Hell, than from the love of God. I was careful to perform all the penance imposed on me, and even desired to do more, so grateful was I to God for the grace He had given me."

Blessed Angela is now among the Saints, so also shall all those one day be who may have fallen as she did, but who have also imitated her in her repentance and perseverance to the end.

V. The Terrible Consequences of a Bad Confession.

My child, of all the evils that could possibly be committed there is no one that can be compared to that of a bad Confession. Willingly would I pass over this subject in silence if it were possible, but it is most necessary to speak of it, that you, my child, by seeing the greatness of the evil, may be led to avoid it, and thus always make a good Confession, which of all great blessings on earth is the greatest.

" WHY DIDST THOU KILL ME ?"

In a book known by the name of " The Spiritual Meadow " we read that there was a certain monastery in the East where the inmates led a life of the most rigorous penance. It was ruled by an Abbot of strict and holy life.

One day a stranger came to the gate and asked to be admitted, that he might do penance for his sins. His request was granted, and he lived there for nine years in the practice of the most rigorous penance. At the end of that time he went to the Abbot and told him that a little child, whom he had killed long ago when he was living the life of a highway robber before his conversion, had appeared to him, and said in a most heartrending tone of voice : " Why didst thou kill me ?"

The Abbot, thinking that the poor man had lost his reason, told him to go and work in the garden.

The penitent did so, but still the same voice rang in his ears : " Why didst thou kill me ?"

He went to the church to pray, but the voice followed him even into the church. At last, no longer able to endure the agony that oppressed his mind, he went to the magistrate, confessed his crime, and begged to be condemned to death. His request was granted, and he was executed.

If remorse for a crime committed in this life, and even repented of, can inflict so terrible a sting in one's conscience, what will it be to hear for ever the voice of conscience cry out to you: "Oh, why did you kill your soul for ever by a bad Confession?" O my child, for the love for God and of your immortal soul never be guilty of such a terrible crime!

THE YOUNG MAN'S LAST WORDS.

Not long ago a priest was called to attend a young man who was dying. He brought the Blessed Sacrament with him. No sooner had the young man seen the sacred Host in the hands of the priest than he cried out in a voice terrible to hear: "Behold Him whom I received unworthily at my First Communion, because I made a bad Confession." Having said these words, he turned his face towards the wall and expired.

A TERRIBLE DEATH.

A certain man who during his whole lifetime had shown but little appearance of religion, became very ill, and his friends sent for the priest.

The dying man made his Confession, such as those make it who have put off to the end their conversion to God in the hope of a death-bed repentance, and the priest was preparing to give him the holy

Viaticum. At the moment when the priest was about to place the sacred Host upon his tongue the wretched man cried out : " Stop, Father, stop ! I have never all my lifetime made but one Communion, and that was a bad one ; I am lost for ever." And he fell back on his pillow, and died in despair.

The principal reason why people, make bad Communions is because they are afraid to tell in Confession some sin they have done. O my child, never be so foolish. Remember that whatever you tell the priest when you go to Confession is a secret, and when you have once told it with sincerity it will be for ever blotted out, and will never again appear against you.

" THIS MAN BELONGS TO ME."

There was a young man who had for some time lived in sin. He had been guilty of doing actions which he was ashamed to tell in Confession, so he did not go to the Sacrament of Penance. At last Easter-time came, and he knew that if he did not then go to the Sacraments everyone would say that there was something wrong ; so he made up his mind to go to Confession. When he was kneeling at the side of the priest to make his Confession, he could not summon courage to tell his sins, so he concealed them. To add to this crime, he next morning went to Communion, and committed another sacrilege by receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ with mortal sin upon his soul.

When he had done this, Satan entered into him as he had formerly entered into Judas, and for some days tormented him in a terrible manner. When

the Bishop of the place heard of this, he sent for him, and seeing that he was really possessed by the devil, he commanded Satan to tell him why he had taken possession of the youth.

The Devil answered : " I have right to this man : he belongs to me, because he has made an unworthy Communion."

The Bishop, in virtue of the powers conferred on him by his office, and by the prayers of the Church, commanded Satan to depart from him. Satan was compelled to obey. When the young man saw that he was freed from Satan, and that his sin was made known, he entered into himself and repented of what he had done, made a good Confession, and ever afterwards lived piously, and was grateful to God for His infinite mercy to him.

This was a great grace which God gave to this man, and one which the unworthy communicant has no right to expect ; for how can one expect to receive pardon who has offended God by such a terrible sacrilege ? O my child, for the love of God always make good Confessions.

" WHAT HAVE I DONE TO YOU ?"

It is related in a little book written long ago, that a certain woman made sacrilegious Communions because she was ashamed to confess certain sins she had committed.

One day, after having been guilty of this crime, the Host she received suddenly took the appearance of a little child, whose eyes were filled with tears, and whose countenance was sad and painful to look at. The child looked on her and said : " Oh, what

have I done to you to merit such cruel treatment from you ?"

The woman was struck with wonder and fear at what she heard and saw. Her faith was not dead, so she fell on her knees and cried to Jesus for mercy and pardon.

" What have you done to me, O Jesus ?" she exclaimed. " You have loved me too much ; You have treated me with too much kindness ! But O Jesus, Jesus, pardon me !"

She continued to weep, and sob, and cry for mercy, as long as the vision was before her, and when it disappeared she went to the church, made a good Confession, and led a life of penance till the day of her happy death.

My child, perhaps you may have offended God, by mortal sin as she did. At this very moment, then, Jesus is beside you, speaking to you as He spoke to her, and begging of you to rise up from the state of sin and come to Him that He may abide in you, for His delight is to be with His children. Oh ! then listen to His voice, and answer : " Yes, Jesus, I will rise from sin, and I will sin no more."

" HOW CAN I TELL THAT SIN ?"

St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, tells us the following story :

" There was once a young girl who, from her infancy, had been brought up in the principles of greatest modesty. One day she was tempted to commit a great sin, and she yielded. But scarcely was the sin committed when her heart was filled with a gnawing remorse.

"'How shall I ever be able to tell my Confessor that sin?' Shame and despair followed, and she fell into a still greater sin. But lest she might be spoken of by her companions, she went to Confession as they did, but concealed the sins.

"This sacrilege only served to increase the torments of her unhappy heart. She thought that by great austerities and mortifications she might obtain pardon without telling them at Confession. She also resolved to enter a convent, where she hoped to acknowledge her crimes in the general Confession which is usually made at the beginning of the novitiate. She indeed did begin to make some efforts to confess them; but she clothed her sins in words which deceived her Confessor, and this made her condition worse than before, and thus she lived for a long time.

"It happened that the Superioress of that convent died, and she was chosen by the sisters to succeed her in that office on account of the very edifying life she led outwardly among them. She did not fill the position long, for in a short time she became seriously ill. Seeing herself in danger of death, she took the resolution of confessing her sins; but still false shame closed her lips. The Devil suggested to her mind that if she confessed her sins as she ought to do, clearly and fully, she would lose her reputation in the eyes of her Confessor, who, as well as the others in the convent, had so high an idea of her piety and sanctity.

"She received the last Sacraments in sentiments of great humility and devotion outwardly, but still in the state of sin. At length she saw that Death

would soon claim her as his own, and this was her last opportunity. She resolved once more to declare all ; but, by a terrible judgment of God she became delirious, and died in her sins.

" The great austerities she had practised and the exemplarly life she had led made everyone certain that she had gone to Heaven. But while they were reciting the usual prayers for the dead for her, she appeared to the religious in a state of the most terrible deformity. ' Cease to pray for me,' she exclaimed ; ' I am lost, because from my childhood, I had concealed a mortal sin in Confession.'

" She then disappeared, leaving the sisters filled with dismay." POSTEL : *Repert. Hist.*, p. 45.

VI. The Absolution of the Penitent.

Absolution is the sentence pronounced by the priest over the penitent when he has made the confession of his sins, by which these sins are taken away if the penitent is in proper dispositions.

The words of absolution are : " I absolve thee from thy sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

My child, when the prodigal son returned to his father, he said : " Father, I have sinned before Heaven and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy child." These words of sorrow and humility at once obtained full pardon from his father, whom he had forsaken. These also must be the sentiments that fill your soul when you kneel at the feet of the priest to make your Confession,

and your Heavenly Father instantly absolves you as that loving father absolved his son when he returned home.

THE JOY OF A GOOD CONFESSION.

It is related that a certain man had committed a great crime, and although his mind was filled with remorse, and although he was most unhappy, he could not make up his mind to go to Confession. He saw Hell open beneath his feet, and he could neither eat nor sleep.

When he had lived in this sad condition for about ten years, he met on a journey a priest, with whom he entered into conversation. One of the things of which the priest spoke was the happiness that follows a good Confession, and how grateful we should be to Jesus Christ for giving us so easy a means of living a happy life.

The man, on hearing these words, showed by his troubled countenance that he was unhappy. The priest said to him : " My friend, perhaps my words have grieved you, or have brought to your mind some sad remembrance."

" Yes," he replied, " I am indeed unhappy."

The priest spoke to him with the utmost kindness, and soon learned the cause of his trouble. " Come with me," he said, " I will soon remove from you that heavy weight that oppresses you." Saying this, he led him to the nearest church, and made him go to Confession.

As soon as he had received absolution, he came out of the Confessional, and leaped and ran about as one who had suddenly become demented.

"What is the matter?" asked the priest in alarm.

The repentant sinner answered: "It seems to me that I could almost fly up to Heaven, for I feel so free and happy. During the last ten years I lived as if I had been already in Hell. But at this moment I feel as if I were in Heaven, I am so happy."

THE ANGEL OF THE CONFESSIONAL.

St. John Climacus relates the following consoling story:

"There lived in the East a young man who had from his youth given himself up to every kind of sin, and was remarkable, even among those who were wicked, for his evil deeds. But God, Who can change the greatest sinner into the greatest Saint, spoke to the heart of this young man, and inspired him with the resolution to return to his Heavenly Father.

"Going at once to a monastery in Alexandria, he fell down at the feet of the Abbot, and besought him to admit him into the number of his religious. The holy man, who had heard much about the bad life of this man, was indeed glad to see him kneeling so humbly at his feet, but fearing that the present emotions would pass away, and that he would not persevere, he said to him: 'My child, you will never be able to practise the austerities which our monks practise; besides, you would never be able to confess your sins publicly in the church as is the custom amongst us.'

"'Yes, my Father,' he answered; 'not only would I confess all my sins before the monks of your house,

but I am willing to confess them in public before all the world if necessary.'

"The Abbot, on hearing this, acceded to his request, and admitted him.

"On the following Sunday, when the monks were assembled in the church to the number of two hundred and thirty, the Abbot ordered the young man to be brought in. He entered clothed in sackcloth and covered with ashes as a sign of his great sorrow. When the monks saw this their hearts were filled with pity, and they wept at his great humility and sincere repentance.

"The Abbot then placed him in the middle of the church and told him to begin his Confession. He at once obeyed, and declared, while shedding copious tears, the terrible sins he had committed during his lifetime. The religious were so amazed at the enormity of his evil deeds that they were surprised that God had permitted him to live.

"During the time he was thus accusing himself, one of the monks saw standing at his side a beautiful angel. He held in one hand a large book in which there was much writing, and in the other hand a pen. At each sin which the man confessed the angel effaced with his pen a line in the book, and when the sinner had ended, every word that had been written in the book had been blotted out.

"God was pleased to make known in this way that he forgave that great sinner all that he had done wrong, because he was sorry for his sins, and had confessed them."

The same thing happens to you, my child, every time you make a good Confession. God's angel

effaces your sins from the book in which they were recorded, never to appear against you again. Oh, try, then, always to make good Confessions, that your sins may be blotted out, and that your soul may become beautiful before God.

If you find it difficult to tell some sin you may have committed, ask the Most Holy Mother of God to obtain for you the grace to confess it.

BLESSED MARTIN CURED.

Blessed Martin, of the Order of the Friars Preachers, was born dumb. For many years he was not able to speak, but he had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and he obtained through her the gift of speech.

He never forgot this favour, and during his whole lifetime continued to thank her for it.

How many who have been spiritually dumb, by concealing their sins in Confession, have obtained through the intercession of Our Lady the grace of making a good Confession. Have recourse to her, then, if this temptation assails you, and you also shall experience her power.

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES CONSOLES HIS PENITENT.

One day St. Francis of Sales was hearing the Confession of a poor woman, who, for many years, had lived a very sinful life. She made her Confession with very great humility and contrition, and shed many tears at the remembrance of how she had offended God.

When she had finished her Confession, she said

to the Saint : " My Father, what do you think of me now, after hearing what I have just told you, all these terrible sins which I have committed ?"

" My child," he answered, " I look upon you now as a Saint."

" Ah, my Father !" she replied, " your conscience must tell you that you must consider me quite the opposite of a Saint, after such a life of sin and evil."

" Not at all," replied the Saint ; " I say exactly what I think, and if men may still look on you as the Pharisee did on St. Mary Magdalen, I look on you as Jesus Christ did on her."

" But, my Father," continued the woman, " what do you think of my past life ?"

" I do not think of it at all. What did exist in the past does not exist now ; it has been entirely blotted out. I now praise God for having granted you the grace of conversion. Ah, I would like to be with the angels in Heaven, to join with them to-day in their joy at seeing one reconciled to God who had been living at a distance from Him."

While saying these words, tears rolled down the Saint's cheeks. The woman saw them, and said to him : " Father, you are weeping. No doubt it is on account of the abominations of my past life that you weep."

" Oh no," said St. Francis, " I weep with joy at seeing you risen again to a life of grace."

So it is with every priest of God when he sees a sinner returning to the life of grace. He rejoices with the angels, and gives glory to God for His infinite love to poor sinners.

Rejoice also, my child, and as you approach the altar think that you hear the voice of Jesus saying to you what He said to His Apostles on the Sea of Galilee : " It is I : be not afraid."

JUDAS MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABSOLVED.

One day Father Milleriot, of the Society of Jesus, was preaching on the Sacrament of Penance. He was speaking of the infinite goodness of God in ordaining the Sacrament of Penance, and to illustrate the force of what he said he gave them the following example :

My brethren, if that unfortunate traitor Judas (after the Apostles had received the power of forgiving sins), instead of hanging himself as he did, and so losing his soul for ever, had gone to St. Peter and said to him : " Will you hear my Confession ?" St. Peter would have said : " Yes, kneel down and begin."

" O Peter, what a miserable wretch I have been ! It was I who betrayed and sold Our Divine Master."

" Is that all you have done, Judas ?" St. Peter would have said. " I did worse than you, for I declared three times, and even with an oath, that I did not know Him. Make, therefore, your act of sincere contrition, and I will give you absolution."

But, alas ! Judas did not repent, and, like many who have followed his wicked example in betraying their Divine Master by committing sin, and neglecting to avail themselves of the Sacrament of Penance, was lost for ever. SCHOUPPE, iii. 266.

VII. The "Seal" of Confession.

The secrecy of the Confessional, or the "Seal of Confession," as it is more generally called, is that law which binds the priest to keep by an inviolable secrecy whatever he has heard from the penitent in Confession. Never has it been known in any age that any priest has ever violated this holy law, and many have been found to suffer even the most cruel death rather than be unfaithful to their trust.

ST. JOHN NEPOMUCEN.

In the fourteenth century there lived in Bohemia an Emperor of Germany whose name was Wenceslaus IV., whose cruelties and sinful life caused him to be called the "Nero" of his time.

Although thus plunged in every vice, he retained at his Court, as was then customary, a priest who might perform the services of the Church in his palace. The one who occupied this position at the beginning of his reign was John, surnamed Nepomucen, who was one of the canons of Prague, and renowned for his great virtue.

Jane, the Empress, a lady of profound piety, moved by the fervour and zeal she beheld in this holy man, chose him as her Confessor, and the director of her conscience, and under his guidance she made great progress in the path of virtue.

But as everything becomes changed into poison in the soul of one corrupted by sin, the daily increasing fervour of Jane only served to augment the bitterness and iniquity of the Emperor. Even the increased marks of tenderness and affection she

showed him displeased him, and the germs of hatred in his heart soon produced their fruit of jealousy. Every one of her actions and every mark of her attachment to him only served to increase it. At last, blinded with passion, he formed the impious design of compelling her Confessor to make known to him what she had said to him in her Confessions. For this purpose he summoned the holy priest to his presence, and began by asking him some questions which turned only indirectly on the matter ; but in a very short time he threw off the mask and asked him plainly what he had resolved to discover.

John answered him with respect, at the same time with firmness, that the question he had proposed was one which was contrary to reason, and abhorrent to every devout mind. " Are you ignorant of this truth, O Emperor," he said, " that I do not know, and ought not to know, out of the tribunal of Confession, that which has been confided to me there ?"

The Emperor for the moment concealed his anger, and relapsed into a mournful silence. A few days afterwards he again sent for him, and making use of words of flattery, and promising great rewards, and even the highest honours it was in his power to confer, endeavoured to learn from him what he so much desired to know.

Seeing that words of kindness had no effect on the man of God, he had recourse to threats. But all to no purpose. The promises of rewards or the threats of punishment were equally unavailing.

He then, in the height of his rage, uttered against him every injurious word his wicked heart could

suggest to him, caused him to be cruelly struck in his presence, and even threatened him with immediate death if he still refused to comply.

"You can kill me, if such is your determination," said the martyr peacefully; "but to compel me to reveal what the laws of God and man oblige me to conceal is beyond your power."

The rage of the tyrant at these words knew no bounds. He ordered him to be seized, to be bound hands and feet, and to be cast into the River Mildaw, which flowed through the city.

This was done, as the Emperor had commanded, on May 16, 1383. A Divine light surrounded his body as it floated in the river, and guided devout men to the place where it was. They took it out of the water, and the canons of the cathedral bore it in solemn procession to the church, and laid it in a magnificent tomb which they had prepared for it where God was pleased to glorify His Saint by many miracles.

The tongue which had borne testimony to the sacredness of the secret of Confession was preserved incorrupt in the Cathedral of Prague, and was exposed to the veneration of the faithful and of pilgrims from all countries of the world.

XLVI

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE: SATISFACTION

I. What is Satisfaction?

Satisfaction is the performance of the penance enjoined by the priest for our sins; and this penance is imposed upon us that we may punish ourselves for our sins, and satisfy, as far as lies in our power, the justice of God for the sins we have committed.

My child, sin, as you have already learned, produces in our souls two sad effects: it makes us the enemies of God, and it causes us to suffer for ever in Hell most unconceivable torments.

When we receive absolution, God in His mercy delivers us from the eternal sufferings of Hell; but He does not always free us from the temporal sufferings, either in this life or in the next, which we have incurred by our sins.

We must therefore do penance—that is, make satisfaction for our sins, either in this world by works of penance, or in the next by the sufferings of Purgatory.

THE ABBOT RANCÉ OF LA TRAPPE.

There lived in France, in the reign of King Louis XIV., a man who was distinguished by his

birth, his learning, and his high position in the world. This man in after-years became the famous Abbot Rancé of La Trappe.

Endowed with all those brilliant qualities which make men shine in the society of the great ones of the world, he in his youth lived in the midst of the enjoyments of the world, and afterwards, when he became a priest, his thoughts were more fixed on the riches he possessed than on the sacred duties of his high office, and the practice of the virtues enjoined by his holy state of life.

But by the grace of God his eyes were opened to the danger he was in of losing his soul, and his mind became preoccupied with the thought of how he could escape this terrible misfortune, and of the manner in which he could perform suitable penance for his past sins.

In this consideration difficulties known only to those who are similarly situated arose before his eyes ; but one of the characteristics of his generous soul was never to recede from any resolution maturely taken, no matter how great these difficulties might be.

His first step was to sell his patrimony, one-half of which he distributed among the poor, and the other he dedicated to works of charity and religion. By doing this he hoped to make amends for the foolish extravagances of the past. But this was not enough. He had also by penitential works to satisfy the justice of God for his former unmortified life, and for the careless manner in which he had acquitted himself of the sacred duties of the priesthood, and nothing could accomplish this but the

resolution to spend the time that yet remained to him in this world in the practice of the most rigorous penance and mortification.

There is situated in the midst of the forests of Perche a monastery famed before his time, and since, by the severity of its rules and the sanctity of its inmates. It is known as the monastery of La Trappe. To this place, therefore, did Rancé turn his eyes, and not long afterwards he bade an eternal adieu to the world, to live for God alone and the salvation of his soul, amidst the appalling austerities practised within its walls.

Whenever a religious is on the point of making his profession, he writes to his family to inform them that he renounces for ever whatever worldly goods he possesses or may be gifted to him. As soon as he has pronounced his vows, he breaks all correspondence with his friends and even with his relatives, and if at any time afterwards he should think of the world, it is only that he may pray for it.

When the Abbot receives information that some relative of a monk is dead, he recommends such a one to the prayers of the community, without indicating in any way who it is. In this manner none of them can ever know when their relatives die. What heroism is contained in this renunciation! What greater act of self-denial could be imagined?

The Trappists must always have their eyes cast down, and must never look upon the face of a stranger. A perpetual silence reigns in their monastery; they cannot say a word the one to the other, but communicate their wants by signs only. Their

food recalls the rigorous abstinence of the ancient anchorites. On the fast days of their Order—and these comprise more than the half of the year—their dinner consists of a piece of black bread, with boiled herbs seasoned with salt, and their evening collation of two ounces of dry bread.

Flesh meat is always interdicted, even on festival days, and this even when any of the brethren are dangerously ill. Visitors and strangers never eat of it within the monastery walls, although in all other ways they are entertained with generous liberality.

Their humility is such as to draw tears from the eyes of even the most hardened worldling. They live in the continual mortification of the senses, and even the smallest faults against their Rule are punished with long prostrations on the ground.

They rise at midnight from the wretched straw mattress on which they have for a short time reposed, to sing in church the Divine office, in winter as well as in summer. Every day, after long prayers and spiritual reading of many hours, they employ themselves in manual labour—digging the ground, harvesting the crops, grinding the corn—in a word, in doing everything that is needed for the support of the monastery.

When any Brother is in his agony he is borne to the church, where he receives the last Sacraments lying upon the ground strewn with ashes, where generally he remains until he has breathed his last.

Such is the daily life of monks of La Trappe, that abode of peace and penance of thousands upon thousands of the disciples of Jesus Christ, and who,

whilst living in the world had less offended God than many who imagine themselves so fervent and holy.

II. Satisfaction in the Early Ages.

Satisfaction in the early ages of the Church was much more severe than in modern times. The Church, in her wisdom, has seen fit to moderate the severity of her ancient laws, because in these days the charity of the faithful has grown cold. There is still, however, the same obligation of doing penance, and if she has restricted her penitential laws and made them less severe, she still continually keeps before our eyes the obligation we are under of doing penance on our own part, and even of doing great penance, in order that we may free ourselves sooner from the debt which we have incurred, and which must be paid to the last farthing before we can enter Heaven.

Pimenius and the Penance of the Solitary.

A solitary in the early days of the Church had fallen into a great sin, and, being filled with sorrow for what he had done, went to the Abbot Pimenius, desiring him to impose on him a suitable penance. "What must I do, my Father, to obtain God's pardon, and to make Him satisfaction?"

The Abbot answered: "Go, my child, to a place far, far distant from the place where you have hitherto dwelt; let your new abode be fixed as far away from your present cell as you can walk for three days and three nights continuously and for

a whole year never partake of any food until evening."

"But, my Father," said the solitary, "if I die before the end of that year, what will become of me?"

He answered: "If you are resolved to perform faithfully the penance I have imposed upon you, and if you were to die even at this moment that I am speaking to you, I would hope that God in His mercy would accept your penance as if it had been completely accomplished."

Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE'S PENANCE.

Amongst all the disciples of Jesus Christ there certainly was no one so dear to Him as St. Mary Magdalene, and there was no one who loved Him so tenderly as she did. She had, indeed, sinned greatly, but her repentance was so great and her love for Jesus so intense, that she merited to hear from His own Divine lips those all-consoling words, "Her sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." Yet this great Saint was not satisfied; she would make satisfaction as far as lay in her power for the evil she had done. We read in her Life that after Our Lord's ascension into Heaven she spent the thirty years she remained in this world in acts of the most rigorous penance, living alone in a solitary cave, and in the practice of the greatest austerities, that she might do penance for her past offences.

SATISFACTION OF THE EMPEROR THEODOSIUS.

The city of Thessalonica having revolted against the Emperor Theodosius, instead of employing the ordinary means prescribed by the laws for the punishment of their crime, he gave way to the natural impulse of his passions, and ordered, in his anger, that every one of the people of that unfortunate city whom his soldiers could find were to be put to death, without distinction of age or sex.

This cruel command was executed to the letter, and seven thousand persons fell under the swords of the soldiers.

Theodosius was at that time residing at Milan, of which St. Ambrose was the Archbishop. When the Saint heard of the cruel massacre, he was penetrated with the most profound grief, and, going to the Emperor's palace, he courageously upbraided him for his monstrous barbarity; and on the following Sunday, when the Emperor was advancing to the church, surrounded by his Court, he went to the door of the church, and in a voice full of sadness, yet at the same time of great firmness, forbade him to enter, saying that he could not permit one to assist at the Most Holy Mysteries whose hands were red with the blood of so many victims whom he had put to death in his anger, without even any semblance of trial.

"Begone hence, O Emperor!" he said to him, "and do not add another crime to the one of which you are already guilty."

Theodosius, terrified under the severe reproaches of the Archbishop, endeavoured to excuse himself

by citing the example of King David, who had also been a homicide.

St. Ambrose answered : " Since you have imitated that great King by your sin, imitate him also by your repentance."

The Emperor, finding no words to reply to this exhortation, retired with submission to his palace, with tears of sorrow and repentance flowing down his cheeks. For the following eight months he led the life of a sincere penitent, considering himself unworthy of joining the faithful in the celebration of the Most Holy Mysteries, and humbly accepting and performing the public penance imposed on him by St. Ambrose.

During the time of his penance he never put on the royal robes, but wore garments which indicated that he had undertaken to make satisfaction for his terrible crime. Whenever he appeared in public he deplored the act he had committed, although it had been more the effect of surprise than of malice.

The ecclesiastical historian Sozomon relates that when at times he entered the church or assisted at the public prayers along with the faithful, it was always in a posture of the greatest humility, not standing up or kneeling with the others, but lying prostrate on the ground, and saying with the penitent King David, whom he desired to imitate in his repentance as he had done in his sin : " My soul hath cleaved to the pavement : quicken Thou me according to Thy word." He would strike his forehead and his breast, and beseech God with tears and much groaning to have mercy on him, these

tears and sighs showing outwardly the sorrow that filled his soul.

In order to provide for the future against any similar judgment taking place, he enacted a law by which it was decreed that no one should be put to death until thirty days after the sentence had been pronounced.

"It was thus," writes St. Ambrose, "that an Emperor was not ashamed to perform a penance which many in humbler life would be afraid or blush to accomplish; and for the rest of his life not one day passed without a renewal of his tears and sorrow and prayers to God to have mercy on him."

ST. AMBROSE: *Sozom.*

III. ON THE PENANCE GIVEN IN CONFESSION.

When you have made your Confession, my child, and received from the priest the admonitions he desires to give you, he asks you to say some prayer or to perform some good work in satisfaction for your sins. This is called a "penance." You must be careful to receive it with humility and perform it sincerely and with great exactness.

"MEMENTO MORI."

It is related that a certain man of noble family, and brought up in comfort and in the enjoyment of the things the world esteems great, was one day touched by the grace of God with the desire of repenting of his past sinful life, and of living for the time to come as a good Christian in the world ought to live.

As he was too well known in his own country, he formed the design of going to Rome, and of making his Confession to the Holy Father himself.

The Pope was much moved by this act of confidence, and readily consented to hear his Confession: moreover, he was even edified by the exact manner in which he made it, and with the marks of sincere repentance he gave and the happy dispositions he manifested.

When the moment came for the imposing of the penance, the gentleman refused to accept any of them; they were not to his liking. "I am not strong enough to fast," he said, "and I have no time to read and pray much. You cannot expect me to go into solitary places to make long meditations, nor to undertake pilgrimages to holy shrines, for the occupations of my state of life leave me no time for these pious works. Neither can I take the discipline, nor lie on a hard bed, for these things would injure my health. And, above all other things, these works you desire to impose on me are, I must confess, not such as a man occupying my position would be expected to undertake, and are not suitable to a person of my condition in life."

The Holy Father in his wisdom then, in place of the penances usually given, contented himself by making him the present of a ring, on which was engraved these words: "Memento mori" (Remember that one day you must die), saying at the same time: "Wear this ring on your finger, and read at least once every day the words that are engraved upon it."

The man was at length satisfied with the short

penance given him, being one also he could so easily perform, and returned home with a peaceful conscience.

But this penance, simple as it was, soon produced within him a great change. The continual sight of the ring, and the daily ejaculation, "Remember that one day you must die," brought the thought of death frequently before his mind.

"Alas!" he said to himself one day, "since I am condemned once to die, the only thing I have to do in this world is to prepare to die well. Of what use is it for me to take so much concern for my health, which must so speedily forsake me? Of what use is it for me to spare my body and treat it so carefully, since it must so soon pass into corruption and become the food of worms?"

When he had for a short time made these reflections, no penance ever seemed to him to be too severe. He gladly accepted whatever was imposed on him in satisfaction for his past misdeeds, and persevered in these happy dispositions till the day of his death.

A VENERABLE BISHOP AND HIS PENITENTS.

A sinner who had committed many and great sins once went to Peter de Corbeil, the venerable Archbishop of Sens, and made to him a full and sincere Confession. His Confession was accompanied with many tears and sighs, and he besought his Confessor to pray to God that He would grant him pardon for them.

"Can it be possible," he said in his humility, "that God could pardon such a sinner as I am?"

"Most certainly, my child. God will pardon you if only you are sorry for your sins and will do penance for them."

"Do penance for them!" he replied. "What penance could I perform that would in any way equal the enormity of my crimes, or move God to pardon me? Ah! impose on me any penance you may judge fit. I am ready to perform it, no matter how severe it may be. But is there any penance long enough or sufficiently great to blot out my iniquities?"

These words moved the holy man to tears—tears of compassion and joy at seeing one so truly penitent. He answered him:

"My child, your penance will only be of seven years."

"What do you say, my Father? Only seven years! when the longest life would be too short to perform the penance I deserve for my sins."

"It will not be so long as seven years," said the Prelate, with emotion; "your penance now shall be to fast on bread and water for three days."

"O Father!" he answered, as his sobs and tears nearly choked his utterance, and striking his breast, "do not treat me so leniently, I beseech you. I am at your feet, and I am asking a favour which no price can purchase. Make my penance in some way equal the offences I have committed. Do not take into consideration my feebleness. I am ready, with God's help, to do anything, to undertake everything that I may obtain a forgiveness I do not deserve."

The Archbishop could not cease admiring the operations of Divine grace in that penitent soul, and

finally said to him: "My child, the penance I will now give you will be to say once devoutly the Lord's Prayer, and I declare unto you that that will be sufficient, and that you may confidently hope that God has granted you full remission of all your sins."

At that moment that man, whose heart was broken with grief, uttered a great cry of joy and astonishment and thanksgiving to the God of all mercies for His goodness to him, and then fell dead at the Archbishop's feet, dying in uttering an act of perfect contrition, his soul immediately ascending to Heaven, without even passing, let us hope, through the cleansing flames of Purgatory.

From the Writings of Thomas Cantimprensis.

A SHORT PENANCE FOR GREAT SINS.

St. Bernard was the means of the conversion of a great sinner called Arnold, who held a high position in the world. This man went to Clairvaux and made to the Saint a sincere and humble confession of all the sins and crimes he had ever committed.

St. Bernard mingled his tears of joy with the tears of contrition which flowed from the eyes of the holy penitent, and imposed on him as a penance to say three times the "Our Father," and to persevere his whole lifetime a faithful member of the Order.

On hearing these words Arnold looked with sadness into the face of the Saint. "O my Father, he said, "do not mock me in this way. A fast of seven years, or even of ten years, and to lie on a bed of ashes, would not be enough to make reparation for my past sinful life; and you give me as a penance

only three times the 'Our Father,' and to persevere till death in fulfilling the Rules of your holy Order."

St. Bernard answered: "My child, do you think that you know better than I what penance ought to be given you?"

"Far be it from me to be so presumptuous," replied Arnold; "but I beg of thee do not spare me now, that I may reach Heaven hereafter, and give me a penance which will in some way make reparation for my evil life."

St. Bernard said: "My child, do as I tell you, and I promise you that, when life is over, you shall enter into the repose of God in Heaven."

The penitent obeyed the Saint and after many years spent in the faithful observance of the Rule, died the death of the just.

THE PENANCE ST. PHILIP NERI GAVE.

It is related in the Life of St. Philip Neri that a certain young man who had lived an evil life went to Confession to the Saint, who received him with the greatest kindness and fatherly joy.

When he had humbly accused himself of all the sins of his life, St. Philip said to him: "My dear child, I am not going to impose a heavy penance upon you. All that I desire you to do is to recite seven times every day the prayer, 'Hail, Holy Queen,' and to kiss the ground, each time saying: 'Perhaps I may die soon.'"

The young man promised to do this, and he kept his promise faithfully. He lived for fourteen years a most pious life, and died a most edifying death.

From the Life of the Saint.

IV. On Performing Voluntary Works of Penance.

The penance you receive at Confession, my child, is generally far from being sufficient to satisfy the justice of God for the sins you may have committed. It is therefore most necessary for you to perform other works of penance while you are still on earth, that you may have less to suffer in the next life

THE DEBT PAID IN FULL.

St. John the Sabatian, in order that he might prepare himself for the next life, left the world and went to spend the rest of his days in prayer and penance in a monastery in Pontus.

During the first night he was in that monastery he saw in a vision certain men, who came to demand payment of a large sum of money which they declared he owed them : in all, one hundred crowns.

When he awoke in the morning, he began to consider what this could signify. " I know what it means," he said. " These one hundred crowns represent the immense debt due by me to God for the sins of my past life. I must now endeavour to cancel it by prayer and good works, and by doing penance."

For this purpose John continued for three years to live a holy life, and was scrupulously obedient to every order he received. God also permitted that the members of that community, seeing that John was a stranger, should treat him without much kindness, and even sometimes with harshness.

At the end of these three years he had another

vision. This time a man came to him and handed him an acquittance for ten crowns of the one hundred that he was told had been due.

In the morning John, on awakening, said to himself: "Can it be possible that, after spending three years in such a mortified way, I have paid only one-tenth of the debt I owe? How shall I ever be able to pay the rest of it? Yet I have contracted it, and it must be paid. I must perform more good works, and do more penance, and submit to still greater humiliations."

In order, therefore, to procure even harsher treatment from the brethren, he pretended to be mad; and they, thinking that he really was what he pretended to be, did not spare him, but allotted to him all the menial work of the monastery. This was for him a great penance, for from his inmost soul he disliked the work they had assigned to him. But the remembrance of the great debt he owed gave him courage, and he performed it with entire submission, and even with joy

This continued for thirteen years, after which he had the consolation of another vision. The men who had come to him the first time returned carrying a folded sheet of paper. John was most anxious to know how much more of the debt had been cancelled, and how much there still remained to be paid.

They told him that, on account of his heroic life during the past thirteen years the entire debt had been paid. So John, humbly kneeling down, gave God thanks for His mercy, and soon afterwards dying, went to enjoy God for ever in Heaven.

EVRARD, COUNT OF MONS.

Evrard, Count of Mons, was penetrated with sincere sorrow for a sin which he had committed during the wars in Brabant.

When the campaign was over, he put on the clothing of a poor man, and left his castle at midnight, without making known to anyone whither he was going or the reason of his secret departure.

Thus disguised, he went in pilgrimage to Rome, and then to Compostella in Spain, that he might make satisfaction to God for what he had done, although by a good Confession he had already received remission of the sin.

When he had accomplished this pious pilgrimage, he returned to his own country, still retaining his penitential garb, which prevented him from being recognized. He then went to a farm which belonged to the Abbey of Morimond and hired himself to the lay brother in charge, that he might tend the swine.

In this labour of humility he served for many years without being recognized. But one day it happened that a servant belonging to two officers of the Count, and who had in former times been in the service of Evrard, approached him as he was occupied in his usual work to inquire the way to a place to which they were proceeding.

The man suddenly recognized the voice of his lost master, and, looking steadfastly on his countenance, soon discovered that it was really the Count who stood before him. Surprised and full of astonishment, he returned in haste to the place where the officers were waiting, who, as soon as they heard

his information, rode to the pigsty, and immediately recognized their lost Count, notwithstanding the renewed efforts he made to disguise himself.

They embraced him with tears of joy, and bestowed on him the marks of respect and reverence due to his high rank.

As soon as the Abbot was informed of what had taken place, he hastened to the farm, and, having saluted him as his noble condition required, asked him why he had concealed himself from them for so long a time, and why he had condemned himself to such a humble life.

Evrard then informed him of the sin he had committed, and that it was to do penance for it that he had left his home and his friends to pass the rest of his life in humble obscurity. And while he related to them his history, he shed an abundance of tears.

When the Abbot heard this, he blessed God Who had sent to his monastery one who was already so far advanced in perfection. He took him with him to the abbey, and received him among the brethren of his Order.

Evrard spent the rest of his life there, and his happy death is recorded in the Annals of Citeaux on March 20. GODESC: *Lives of the Saints, August* 20.

ST. MARY OF EGYPT, PENITENT.

Under the Emperor Theodosius the younger there lived a holy man named Zozimus. When he had served God with great fervour for about fifty-three years, the thought came into his mind that no one

in the world could be more perfect than he. But God was pleased to let him know that he had not yet reached the height of perfection, and that if he went to a certain monastery near the Jordan he would find men much more perfect than himself.

Zozimus went to this monastery, and found that those who dwelt in it resembled the angels in Heaven more than men in this world.

It was the custom among them every year at the beginning of Lent to leave the monastery, and betake themselves to the deserts to spend that holy season in works of penance and prayer. They returned home for Palm Sunday, to celebrate together the solemnities of Holy Week and Easter.

Zozimus, to imitate them, also went to the wilderness to sanctify the holy season of Lent.

On the twentieth day after he had gone into the desert, as he was kneeling at his prayers about midday, he perceived at a little distance something resembling a human being. Wondering in his mind what it could be, he rose up and went towards it. As he drew near he saw that it was a woman, whose body was darkened by continual exposure to the elements, and whose hair was as white as snow.

As soon as she saw him approaching, she fled away. Zozimus, though an old man, ran after her with great speed, crying out: "Why do you run away from me, O servant of God? I am an old man and a sinner; I ask you in the Name of God to stop and give me your blessing."

The woman answered: "Ah, Zozimus, priest of the Most High God! throw me your mantle, that I may cover myself with it. It is not I who can

bless you, for I am a great sinner, but it is you who must bless me, because you are God's anointed."

Zozimus was astonished that she knew his name, and that he was a priest. He laid his cloak upon the ground, and, retiring to a little distance, knelt down to pray.

When she had put on his mantle she approached him, and, kneeling at his feet, besought his blessing. Zozimus gave it to her ; then he also knelt down and asked her to bless him.

" Blessed be the Name of God," she answered, " Who desireth so much the salvation of souls."

Zozimus answered : " Amen." Then they both arose from their knees.

The holy man now asked her to tell him who she was, where she came from, and why she was leading a life of so much penance.

She answered : " O Father, I ought to die of shame in making known to you who I am. But I will tell you all, only I ask of you in return to remember me in your prayers, that God may show me mercy on the day of His terrible judgment.

" I was born in Egypt. When I was twelve years old, I left my father's house and went to Alexandria, where, for twenty-seven years, I committed sins of the greatest enormity. It happened just at that time that I saw a great many people going towards the coast, and I asked them where they were going. They told me they were going to Jerusalem, to celebrate the festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I joined myself to them, and along with them reached Jerusalem, where I continued to live in sin.

"When the festival day came I saw all the people going towards the church. I went thither also. When I came to the door and tried to go in, I found it impossible to do so: something held me back. Four times I renewed my endeavours to enter, but with a similar result.

"Then I retired to an obscure place near the church, and began to ask myself what could be the cause of it, that, while all the other people were able to go in to venerate the Holy Cross, I alone was kept out. God in His loving goodness at the same moment opened my eyes, and I saw that it was on account of the evil life I had led. I threw myself on my knees and began to weep; I struck my breast, and called upon God for mercy. At the same instant, raising my eyes towards the porch of the church, I saw above it a statue of the Most Holy Mother of God. Fixing my eyes on it, I prayed to her who is the refuge of sinners, saying: 'O glorious Virgin, Mother of God, I know that I am not worthy to raise up my eyes to thy holy image, for thou art so holy and so pure, and I am so very wicked. Yet I know that thou didst merit to bear in thy chaste womb the Son of God, Who came down from Heaven for the sake of poor sinners; I therefore humbly ask thee not to forsake me. Permit me to enter the church and to fix my eyes on that Cross on which thy holy Son died for me, and I promise thee, in the name of that same Divine Saviour, never to sin again. As soon as I have venerated the Holy Cross I will renounce the world and go to the place thou shalt point out to me, that I may do penance for

my sins. O holy Virgin, thou wilt be my guide and my protectress.'

" When I had said this prayer I felt my soul filled with great consolation. I went towards the church, and was able to enter it without any difficulty, and even to go up to the sanctuary and there to venerate that same Holy Cross which had given life to man. I prostrated myself in gratitude to God on the pavement of the church, which I watered with my tears ; then, rising up, I returned to the entrance of the church where the image of Mary was, and I prayed to her a second time, saying : ' O Mary, it is now time for me to fulfil the promise I made before thee. Be pleased, therefore, my Lady, to tell me where I should go, and what I must do to obtain thy Divine Son's pardon.' Then I heard a voice that said : ' If you pass over the Jordan, you will find rest.'

" As I was going towards the place indicated, a stranger met me. He put three pieces of silver into my hand, saying: ' Take this.' With the money he gave me I bought three loaves, and went onwards towards the Jordan. When I came to the Church of St. John the Baptist, which is built on the banks of the river, I went in. There I made my Confession, and received Holy Communion. Again beseeching Our Lady to guide me, I passed over the water and came into this wilderness, where I have lived ever since, awaiting patiently the time when God, having granted me pardon, will take me to Himself."

The holy man asked her how long she had been in the wilderness, and how she had been able to

subsist since she came into it; also if she had to endure any temptations since she began to lead a more perfect life.

She answered: "I have been here nearly forty-seven years, as far as I have been able to count. As to my food, I had the three loaves I bought before I came. They, indeed, soon became hard as stones, but for a long time I took a little of them with water to drink. With regard to my temptations, the very recollection of what I had to endure makes me tremble even now. For twenty-seven years I suffered the most terrible temptations. Often I seemed on the point of yielding and of going back again to my former sinful life. But Mary was my protectress; without her help I certainly never would have been able to overcome. At these awful moments I threw myself upon the ground, and earnestly besought her not to forsake me, but to gain for me the victory. I would then remain lying there and continue humbly to pray until the temptation left me. For the last twenty years I have enjoyed a profound peace, thanks to her who has ever protected me."

After finishing this narration, she begged Zozimus not to speak about her to anyone as long as she lived. She then asked him to come next year on the eve of Holy Thursday and to bring with him the Blessed Sacrament of Our Lord's Body and Blood; then, recommending herself to his prayers she went in haste into the wilderness.

On the following year, as she had requested, Zozimus returned to the desert, taking with him in a silver pyx the Most Holy Sacrament. In due

time he reached the banks of the Jordan. He had not been long there when he saw her approaching on the opposite side of the river. She made the sign of the Cross over the waters, and came over to the place where Zozimus was waiting. On seeing this, the holy man was about to fall on his knees at her feet, but she forbade him to do so, saying: "Kneel not before me, for thou art a priest of God; thou dost hold in thy hands the great God of Heaven." Zozimus then gave her Holy Communion, and the two great servants of God, after praying for a little time together, departed from each other.

Zozimus, at her request, promised to return in the following year at Easter to the place where they had first met. Then, making the sign of the Cross, she passed over the river as she had come.

The next year the holy man went again into the desert. When he drew near to the place appointed, there was a brightness like that of the sun shining all around, and, going nearer, he found the body of the once great sinner, but now the holy penitent, lying on the sand. She was dead.

On the ground near where she lay he saw, written, as it were, with the finger, these words: "O priest of God, Zozimus, bury here the body of the sinner Mary" (it was only then that he learned her name); "give to the earth what belongs to it, and pray to God for my soul. I died on the night of the sacred death of Jesus, Good Friday, the 9th of April, not long after having received Holy Communion."

Zozimus was filled with grief, and at the same time with pious joy, when he saw her there stretched

out upon the ground. Having said over her remains the Office of the Dead, according to the custom of the Church, he buried her on the spot where she lay, assisted by a lion which God had sent to his aid.

Lives of the Saints of the Desert: St. Mary of Egypt.

My child, you may not, perhaps, have sinned as grievously as St. Mary of Egypt did, but you have certainly offended God in many ways. When you read of the heroic works accomplished by the saintly penitents in satisfaction for their sins, you should resolve to do at least some little acts of penance to make reparation for your faults, so that not only by your words, but also by your actions, you may show your Heavenly Father how sorry you are for having offended Him.

V. Satisfaction for Sin in the Next World.

The Scripture tells us, my child, that nothing defiled can enter Heaven. Now, there are souls who, while in this world, had committed many and great sins, for which, in the Sacrament of Penance, they received pardon, without, however, having by their penance made full satisfaction for them. And there are others who have gone into eternity stained with many venial sins and imperfections. These are all, indeed, the friends of God, but they cannot be admitted into His Divine presence until they have made in Purgatory full satisfaction for these sins. The sufferings of Purgatory are intense, yet these holy souls willingly submit to endure them, that they may enter unblemished into the abode of

the Saints, and they must remain in that prison "until they have paid the last farthing."

But God, in His infinite goodness, has placed it in our power to shorten the time of their imprisonment by our prayers, our good works, and the indulgences we may gain and offer up in their behalf.

THE AWFUL PENALTY.

The Venerable Francisca of the Blessed Sacrament, a Carmelite nun at Pampeluna, devoted her whole life to the relief of the holy suffering souls, and as a reward God frequently made known to her their sufferings, as also the cause of them. She beheld the souls of several Carmelites still in Purgatory—ten, twenty, thirty, and more years after their death. A saintly Bishop, for some negligences in his high office, had been in Purgatory fifty-nine years before he appeared to the servant of God; another Bishop, so liberal towards the poor that he was called the Almsgiver, had been there five years, because he had at one time a desire for this dignity; a gentleman sixty-four years for being too fond of playing at cards for money; another thirty-five years for worldliness. Moreover, she even saw souls very severely punished merely for having been scrupulous in this life, and not laying aside their scruples when obedience told them to do so. She mentions the case of a girl of fourteen in Purgatory, because she was not quite conformed to the Will of God in dying so young; and one soul said to her: "Ah! men little think in the world how dearly they are going to pay in Purgatory for faults they hardly notice there." FABER: *All for Jesus.*

THE CRIES OF THE SUFFERING SOULS IN PURGATORY.

The holy souls of Purgatory often appeared to Blessed John Massias of Spain while he was at his prayers; and as he had the pious custom of often spending the night in the chapel before the altar of the Most Holy Mother of God, they came at that time specially, to ask him to pray for them.

"O blessed John," they said to him, "pray, oh! pray for us to God, that we may be freed from our terrible sufferings, and offer up to Him in our behalf all these works of penance you are in the habit of performing."

The cries of these poor suffering souls reached the good man's heart, and he imposed on himself still greater penances in their behalf; and as often as he had obtained by his prayers and good works the deliverance of any one of these suffering souls, it would appear to him to thank him. This was for him a sufficient reward, and encouraged him to do more and more for them, that he might procure the freedom of a still greater number.

Pet. Bolland., Oct. 3.

ST. GERTRUDE S VISION OF THE SOUL OF ONE OF HER RELIGIOUS.

There lived in the convent in which St. Gertrude was Abbess a holy religious, who during her whole lifetime edified everyone by her piety, and was beloved by all on account of her gentle disposition. When the hour of her death drew near she received the Sacraments of the Church with edifying devotion, and died the death of the just.

At the moment her soul left her body St. Gertrude had a vision. She saw the soul of the deceased Sister enter a dwelling which was adorned with great magnificence. Jesus Christ was there, His five wounds exposed, and shining with intense brightness. He gazed with a benign countenance on the soul of the deceased Sister; but she stood before him with downcast eyes, as if she did not dare to look on His face, although the sight of His five glorious wounds seemed to give her immense consolation.

St. Gertrude, seeing this, said to Our Lord: "Why is it, O my God, that Thou Who art the God of all consolation, and Who dost show Thyself with so great sweetness to me, dost permit Thy servant to stand before Thee downcast and sad?"

Jesus answered her: "My daughter, from My presence this soul receives pleasure indeed, but only that which proceeds from the sight of My humanity; hence she is full of sadness because she is deprived of that of My Divinity; but when the negligences of her past life have been blotted out by suffering the punishment necessary to destroy them, she will then be entirely happy by seeing Me as I am face to face in all My glory."

Gertrude, moved with compassion, said in answer to this: "O my Lord, let Thy most compassionate Heart bend towards this Thy child, who from her infancy was most devoted to Thee, and absolve her even at this moment from the punishment due to her negligences, and admit her to see Thee at once face to face."

Jesus answered: "I will reward in due time, and

that, too, in a superabundant manner, her devotion towards Me and the works of piety she performed during the time of her trial on earth; but it is necessary, in the first place, because My justice requires it, that every stain be removed before she can enter into everlasting joy." Then affectionately placing His Divine hand on the head of the religious, He added: "And to this My spouse herself most willingly consents, so that she may enjoy the vision of the glory of My Divinity." When he had said this, she, as if in answer, bowed her head with loving resignation.

St. Gertrude, knowing the great relief given to souls by the Holy Mass, immediately procured that one should be offered up for her soul; and when Mass was ended, the religious again appeared to her, but this time all shadow of sorrow had passed away, and she seemed to be bathed in a sea of intense joy. She said: "Now I know in truth how great is the justice of God, for I see that every good work man performs on earth, even the smallest and least important, has its reward in Heaven; and also that every, even the smallest, fault committed on earth must be atoned for either before death by penance, or after death in Purgatory. Whilst I lived on earth it was my delight to receive Holy Communion as often as I could; now I have in return received, from the offering up of the Divine Sacrifice, the greatest relief. I also while in the world lived in peace with everyone; now I have obtained great benefit from the prayers that have been said for me. Now I go to Heaven to receive there the eternal reward I had hoped for."

With these words she departed ; and St. Gertrude saw her ascend to Heaven in the midst of beautiful, magnificent glory. BLOSIUS : *Mon. Spir.*, xiii.

"LEWIS, MY SON, HELP ME !"

Not long after the death of his father St. Lewis Bertrand saw his soul suffering the grievous pains of Purgatory. Often he used to hear him lamenting in a sorrowful voice : " Lewis, my son, help me ! Have pity on me ; pray for me, that I may be delivered from these pains !"

Sometimes it appeared to him as if he saw his father in bodily shape thrown violently to the ground from some high tower, with violence enough to fracture all his bones ; at other times he saw him most grievously beaten, or covered with gaping wounds like those a dagger would inflict. These heartrending visions of his father's sufferings continued constantly for the space of eight years, during all which time Lewis prayed and fasted and scourged himself to blood.

At last (in 1556) his soul was refreshed with a delightful vision, in which he saw his father shining brightly, his face radiant with joy, and reposing in a garden of flowers more lovely than any this world can produce. When we consider that the father of St. Lewis Bertrand led a most exemplary life, and that his son offered for him such fervent and constant prayers and penances, it is certainly surprising that, in spite of all this, he was detained in Purgatory, and suffered so intensely for eight whole years. Lewis was asked whether he knew why his father had thus suffered. He answered that he

thought it was because in his business as notary, when acting in the capacity of agent for certain rich families of Valencia, he may have participated in some measure in sins committed by them or at their command.

WILBERFORCE: *Life of St. Louis Bertrand.*

VI. On Indulgences.

An Indulgence, my child, is a remission of the temporal punishment which often remains due to sin after the sin itself has been remitted. An Indulgence, therefore, is not in any sense a pardon of sin, either past, present, or future; it always presupposes that the guilt of the sin has already been remitted.

The Church has attached Indulgences to the recital of certain prayers and the performance of certain good works. By fulfilling faithfully what the Church has enjoined, a remission is granted of all the temporal punishment due for the sins committed, if a Plenary Indulgence is fully gained, or a certain portion of that debt still due if only a Partial Indulgence has been gained. Hence you can easily see how very salutary to the Christian people is the use of Indulgences.

IN THE DAYS OF PERSECUTION.

In the early history of the Church we know that the children of God had to endure the most terrible persecutions, and many of them suffered unheard-of tortures for their Faith.

By the infinite goodness of God and His love for those who thus willingly laid down their lives for

His sake, immense multitudes gained the crown of martyrdom. But all did not persevere to the end; some were found amongst the faithful whom the fear of tortures and of death caused to deny their Faith—at least, outwardly—by consenting to offer sacrifice to the idols, or by obtaining certificates to present to the magistrates, intimating that they had done so, and so their lives were spared.

When the storm had blown over, and with it the danger they had feared so much had passed away, many of these cowardly Christians repented of their crime, and going to the Bishops who ruled the flock of Christ, begged to be readmitted to the union of the faithful.

The Bishops consented to grant them their request, on condition that they would perform long and public penances on account of their great sin, and to make reparation for the scandal they had given to the Church of God by their cowardly conduct. Full of grief at seeing themselves excluded from participating in the Divine Mysteries, they were accustomed to visit the holy confessors of the Faith, many of whom were still in prison, and all bearing the marks of the wounds they had received for God's sake, and begged of them letters of recommendation to the Bishops, to abridge in their name and in memory of what they had suffered for the Faith the length and severity of their punishment.

Their pastors, seeing their deep sorrow and sincere repentance, and considering that they had proved themselves worthy of forgiveness by their humble submission to the penance imposed upon them, applied to those who thus petitioned it the

superabundant merits of the confessors and martyrs, and thus diminished the severity of the penances imposed upon them and the length of time appointed for accomplishing them, and in this way also remitting before God part of the punishment due for their fall.

This means of gaining Indulgences ceased when the great persecutions were ended, but the Church still continued to grant favours of the same kind to penitents who performed certain appointed works, such as fasting, prayer, and alms-deeds. At the present day these favours are still granted, and even in greater abundance, for there is nothing the Church desires so much as to see her children increase in devotion and in God's love, and that they may, whilst still on earth, purify their souls by works of penance and piety, by means of the Indulgences she offers them, that when their pilgrimage is over they may the sooner be united with God in the company of His elect.

Catéchisme de Rodez. vi. 339.

Many of these Indulgences are applicable to the faithful departed, and many devout people are accustomed to bestow them on these poor suffering souls, instead of applying them to their own use, in order that these souls may the sooner be released from their sufferings, and become their intercessors before the throne of God in Heaven.

This is a great act of charity, and one that is most pleasing to God, while it is at the same time most beneficial to ourselves.

"WHEN YOU MEET JESUS, REMEMBER ME."

A very pious nun died in the convent in which St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi lived.

While her corpse lay exposed in the church, the Saint lovingly looked at it, and prayed fervently that the soul of her Sister might soon enter eternal rest.

Whilst she was thus rapt in prayer, the Sister appeared to her, surrounded with great splendour, in the act of ascending into Heaven. The Saint, on seeing this, could not refrain from calling out to her: "Farewell, dear Sister. When you meet your heavenly Spouse, remember me."

At these words Our Lord Himself appeared to the Saint, and revealed to her that this Sister had entered Heaven so soon on account of the Indulgences that had been gained for her.

Life of St. M. Magd. de Pazzi.

XLVII

EXTREME UNCTION AND HOLY ORDER

EXTREME UNCTION

I. In what Extreme Unction Consists.

My child, in the fifth chapter of the Epistle of St. James we read: "Is anyone sick among you? let him bring in the priests of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction, therefore, is the anointing of the sick with holy oil, accompanied with prayer. It is given when we are in danger of death by sickness, and its effects are to comfort and strengthen the soul, to remit sin, and even to restore health when God sees it to be expedient.

EDMUND, THE YOUNG STUDENT OF ST. ACHEUL.

The youthful Edmund was seized by a serious and what most frequently is a fatal illness. His Superiors, seeing his danger, considered it their duty gently to make it known to him, that he might

prepare to make a happy end. They followed up this by inspiring him with resignation to the Will of God.

" Yes," he answered in reply to their question if he were prepared to die—" yes ; I resign myself entirely to God's Holy Will. I firmly believe all that God has revealed, and I love Him with my whole heart."

To procure him more strength to combat the enemy of our souls, they asked him if he desired to receive Extreme Unction.

" Oh yes," he answered ; " be pleased to give me that great Sacrament. I desire most ardently to receive it."

When the Father Superior was administering it, he himself answered the prayers with edifying piety.

The effects of this Sacrament soon became manifest, for it appeared to the bystanders that Satan was assaulting him with great temptations. He moved his head from side to side, as if to avoid seeing some terrible object, and he stretched forth his arms as if he wanted to drive away an enemy who annoyed him. " You grieve me," he said, as if speaking to a visitor invisible to the others ; " begone from me ; I do not want you, and I will never do what you ask me. No, O my God, I will serve Thee and love Thee alone."

During another access of pain he with a firm voice, began the Lord's Prayer, which the others said along with him. Another time he seemed more troubled than ever. The Fathers who knelt by his bedside said gently to him : " My child, be

not afraid; there are five priests kneeling around you."

"O my Father," he replied in a scarce audible voice, "I am not afraid." Then he continued speaking to his Heavenly Father: "O my Jesus, have mercy on me, and blot out all the sins I have ever committed against Thee. O my God, into Thy hands I commend my soul."

This pious young man died on May 27, 1825, in the fifteenth year of his age.

Petit Souvenir de la Retraite.

HOW THE CHRISTIANS OF CHINA ESTEEM EXTREME UNCTION.

The Christians of China are a model to us in their esteem for the Sacrament of Extreme Unction and in their desire to receive it.

"Our Christians," writes Father Gouet, a missionary in China, "have a great devotion for this Sacrament. A cold, or a slight fever, or a headache, is enough to make them send for us to administer it to them, and when an illness of a more severe kind visits any one of them, their desire for its reception is intensified. There is among them such a simple faith in God's fatherly care of them that they anxiously make use of all the means He has left in His Church for their consolation. God, on His part, in return, frequently bestows upon them the temporal blessings which are sometimes conveyed by means of Extreme Unction, by restoring to their sick their bodily health.

"Many will no doubt be astonished to learn that it frequently happens, on account of the scarcity

of priests in those regions, that these pious Christians place in a boat the sick person who evidently has only a few days to live, and convey him fifty, eighty, or even a hundred miles to receive the last Sacraments. This is not an uncommon event. But no one could narrate in ordinary words the piety and resignation of these good people when Extreme Unction is being administered to them. What an example it is for those," continues the missionary, " who dwell in a country where priests are to be found at a very short distance! How great will be the responsibility of those who neglect the spiritual aids which the worthy reception of the Sacraments of the dying places within their reach, as well as the danger to which they thus expose themselves, especially at that last hour, when the temptations of the Evil One are so great!"

II. The End of our Mortal Pilgrimage.

There is nothing in this world that brings so much terror to the heart of man as the approach of death—that moment when time is ended and eternity begins.

Jesus Christ, my child, knowing this well, has come to the aid of the dying person with this most consoling Sacrament, in which his soul is comforted and prepared for meeting Him at His judgment-seat.

How often, too, has the witnessing of the administration of this Sacrament made those still in good health consider that their own end must one day come, and thus brought them to amend their

lives, according to the words of the Holy Ghost: "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."

ST. HEDWIGES OF POLAND.

When St. Hedwiges, Duchess of Poland, reached the end of her admirable life, and before her last illness had come upon her, she sent for her Confessor, Father Matthew, a Cistercian monk, and besought him to administer to her the sacrament of Extreme Unction.

When the Sisters of the community heard of this, they were filled with consternation at the thought that one so dear to them was so soon to be taken from them. Although she seemingly was in her usual good health, they knew that she would not have acted thus had she not seen that her end was near; and they saw that God must have made this known to her, as He had on many previous occasions made the future manifest to her. They, therefore, were filled with grief, for they could not conceal from themselves that they were soon to be deprived of her counsels, her example, and her beloved company.

But Sister Adelheides, who was specially loved by the Saint, going towards her, said: "My lady, why do you afflict us all in this manner by asking that Extreme Unction should be administered to you, seeing that you are in good health, and that there is no appearance of death upon you? That Sacrament is given only to those who are in danger of death by sickness."

Hedwiges answered: "I know, O Adelheides—I

know well the truth of what you say—you have well explained to me the custom of the Church in this matter—but there is also something else which merits your consideration. When a person who is dying is fortified by the spiritual arms it places in our hands to enable us to vanquish the fiery darts of the most Wicked One, this help should be the object of our most earnest desires, and should be received with the most fervent devotion. Although I am at present seemingly well, I know that the hand of Death is upon me, and I fear that, as the malady increases in intensity, I may not be able to receive this salutary help with so much attention and devotion as I could now feel, for we stand in need of every help in our power at the terrible moment when we have to appear before God."

To place her conscience at rest, her request was granted, as there seemed to be sufficient signs that she might not linger long. When she had been anointed, the illness declared itself outwardly, and she gradually sank into great weakness, which ended in her happy death. SURIUS: *In Vit. ejusd.*

A MOTHER CONVERTED BY HER DAUGHTER.

"During the year 1824," relates a worthy and pious priest, "I was called upon to give the last Sacraments to a young woman who was in danger of death. She dwelt in her mother's house. Her mother was a widow, and had not approached the Sacraments for many years. I had often spoken to her on the subject, but my words had made no impression on her, and in the end, whenever she saw me coming near, she would conceal herself

somewhere in the house, that she might not meet me.

" The daughter, on the contrary, was pious ; but her heart was filled with sadness at her beloved mother's neglect. She seemed not to be afraid to die ; her only concern was about her mother, whom she would leave behind her.

" On the day when she received the Sacraments of the dying, and when I was on the point of departing, she asked me to tell her mother that she desired to speak to her, at the same time adding the request that I would remain near, to hear what she had prepared to say to her.

" When her mother entered, she was surprised to see her child weeping, for hitherto she had always been of a gay disposition, notwithstanding the sufferings of her illness.

" ' Why are you weeping, my dear child ?' she said, as she sat down by her bedside. ' Keep up your courage, you who have always until now been so patient.'

" ' O, my dearly-beloved mother,' she answered in the midst of her sobs ; ' I am weeping and sorrowful because I have sent for you to say good-bye to you. Ah ! this is indeed the saddest trial of all.'

" ' But why are you not resigned to your condition, as you have always hitherto been ?'

" ' Alas ! my mother,' was her answer, ' it is because I must say good-bye to you for ever.'

" ' What do you say, my child ? What do you mean ?'

" ' It is only too true, my mother,' the girl replied. ' The farewell I say to you to-day is for all

eternity. You and I are not walking on the same path. By frequenting the Sacraments I am endeavouring to walk on the road to Heaven, and I hope to possess there the reward that God has promised me. As for you, my poor mother, since you neglect to receive them, you separate yourself from me, and can never expect to meet me in the life to come. We are walking on two different roads, which can never meet.'

" She pronounced these words with a firm voice. In the meantime I, who was a witness of all that had passed, was surprised and moved at her courage, and impatiently awaited the result of the interview.

" The countenance of her mother became pale, and tears filled her eyes. Then the young dying girl seemed to collect her remaining strength, and, raising herself up on the bed, said : ' O my mother, my dearest mother, farewell. I will never, never see you again ! Farewell for ever and ever—yes, for ever !'

" On hearing these terrible words, the mother fainted. As soon as she had sufficiently recovered to remember what had taken place, she went towards the bed on which her child was lying, and said : ' No, my child, we shall not be separated. Be comforted, then, in this your dying hour. Until now I have been your mother ; to-day you have become mine, for you have begotten me to God. I will go to Confession, and I will from this moment lead a good Catholic life.'

" ' Sir,' said she, turning towards the priest, ' would you be pleased this very day to hear my Confession ? My child must receive from me be-

fore she leaves me the consolation of knowing that I have kept my promise.'

" I appointed a time when I would be at leisure to see her, and she was faithful to her promise. This change was a great consolation to the young girl, who died a few days afterwards in peace, with the hope that she would soon see her mother again, and join with her in singing the praises of God in eternity." GUILLOIS : *Exp. de la Catéch.*, 414.

" IT WAS SHE WHO SENT YOU TO ME."

The following story was told by a retired officer of the French army :

" Some little time ago I had occasion to be at Nantes, a little town of Aveyron, where I met an aged woman of the working class, who appeared to be very sad. She told me that she had lost her only son, and I offered her my sympathy in her bereavement. She told me nearly in the following words his history :

" ' I had an only son. I loved him as a mother only can love, and he also loved me affectionately. He was intelligent, and I gave him the best education I could. He was also studious and clever, carrying off all the prizes of his class. I was proud of him—perhaps too much so. People who knew him predicted for him a brilliant future. I allowed him to leave me to pursue his studies elsewhere : they said that it would be for his good.

" ' When he was about to take his departure, I said to him, while embracing him : " You love Our Blessed Lady, my child. Keep in mind that she never forsakes those who have recourse to her.

Will you promise me always to love her, my Charles ?"

" ' " O my mother," he said, as he threw his arms round me, " I promise faithfully to love her, and pray to her."

" ' He went to Marseilles. At first he wrote letters to me frequently, full of pious thoughts and affectionate words. After a time they reached me less frequently, till at last they ceased altogether. You can imagine how I wept, and prayed, and waited in hopeful expectation ; but letters never came.

" ' One day—oh, a very long time afterwards, I received a telegram containing these words : " Come quickly : your son desires to see you." I departed immediately, and twenty-four hours afterwards arrived at Marseilles.

" ' I hastened towards the house where Charles dwelt. The doorkeeper at first would not permit me to enter. " I am his mother," I said ; and I ascended the stairs as if I was insane. I entered his room, notwithstanding the endeavour of two men to keep me back by force.

" ' Poor Charles ! my own child ! He was lying very ill : he was dying. On seeing me he threw his wasted arms around my neck and said : " I asked her, mother, and she has sent you to me. Go for a priest at once."

" ' I tried to calm him. Then he gave me an account of what had befallen him. He was, he said to me, a Freemason, and had sworn to live and die without God. He had been seized with a sudden and dangerous illness, and, seeing himself hastening

onwards to his last hour, he began to call to mind that he was a Christian, and to think of the happy days of his innocence.

" ' He asked that a priest should be sent for ; but this request was refused. Two of his new friends were standing near the door, like watchmen of the Devil, to keep the priest from entering, if by chance he could have been sent for. Even the woman who nursed him refused to go for him ; and my Charles was dying.

" ' Then he called to mind the promise he had made to me many years before, that he would always be devout to Mary, and the beautiful prayer, the " Memorare," came once more to his lips, and with a loud voice he repeated it. A young woman, or, rather, an angel of God in the flesh, heard him, and took the opportunity of the nurse's momentary absence to enter the room.

" ' Filled with pity for the unhappy man, she sent me the telegraphic message, and I arrived in time to save my poor child, for these enemies of God soon retired when they saw me, his mother, present.

" ' " Can you imagine, beloved mother," he said to me—" can you imagine what they were to do with my body when I was dead ? They pressed me to sign a paper consenting to deliver it up to them after I was dead, that they might bury it as they might decree. I absolutely refused to do this, for I knew that it would cause you to die of grief."

" ' A priest whom I had sent for in the meantime arrived, and having reconciled my child to God in the Sacrament of Penance, administered to him the last Sacraments of the Church.

" ' I remained at his side for the two remaining days of his life, and when the end came, he whispered to me with his last breath : " Mother dearest, it was she who sent you to me."

" ' A moment afterwards my poor dear child was with God.' " *Confiance en la Misericorde de Dieu*, p. 148.

III. Satan's Temptations at the Last Hour.

When the hour of death is at hand, Satan, who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, assaults the dying Christian with redoubled efforts to gain his soul, knowing that his time is short, and that he may escape from his hands. None are free from these terrible assaults—not even the greatest Saints of God. Hence how fervently we should beseech Our Blessed Lady to pray for us, not only now, but in a special manner at the hour of our death.

LAST WORDS OF ST. MARTIN.

It is related in the life of St. Martin of Tours that when he was lying on his death-bed Satan appeared to him in a visible manner under a most hideous form to frighten him.

" Why have you come hither, you cruel brute ?" said the Saint to him. " You will find nothing in me belonging to you. The bosom of Abraham is even now open to receive me."

Would to God that in our last moments we may be able to repeat these words of that great Saint, and be able to say with truth to Satan that he will find nothing in us belonging to him !

Life of St. Martin.

A FORTUNATE MISTAKE.

The following story was related by a priest who dwelt in the town of Douai, in the North of France :

" It was in the month of December, 1855. I had just returned home after a hard day's work among my flock, and was saying my Office before retiring to rest, when someone knocked at the door. When I opened it, I saw a little girl, who said : ' Please, Father, would you go to No. 28 of a certain street, for there is an old woman there who is dying, and desires to see you ?'

" I told her I would go along with her ; but she replied that she did not think the case was so urgent, and only requested me not to put it off till next morning, but to come that night. The girl then left me, and went back to prepare what was necessary for the administration of the last Sacraments.

" When I had finished my Office, I took the holy oils and took my departure for the house where the dying woman lay. The night was cold and bleak, and the rain was falling in torrents.

" When I reached the street indicated by the girl, instead of entering No. 28, I entered the house numbered 18. Although I had not at the moment my memorandum-book with me, I was quite certain that this was the number she gave me, and which I had carefully entered therein.

" The house was one evidently occupied by very poor people, and the entrance was very dark, so that it was only by carefully creeping along that I found the staircase. When I reached the first

story I knocked at the first door I came to. It was opened by a man, who, as soon as he saw that I was a priest, burst forth into words of hatred against me and the Church, and when I asked him if this was the place where the dying woman lay, his only reply was to repeat the words of insult he had already uttered, and he finished by shutting the door in my face.

"I then went to the next door and knocked. It was opened also by a man who treated me in a way similar to that in which the other had received me. I was tempted to reply in harsh words, but when I remembered that I was the servant of Him Who, when He was reviled, did not revile, I endeavoured to bear all these insults with patience.

"I then ascended to the next story. A little boy was standing near the top of the stairs. 'My child,' I said to him, 'can you tell me if there is a poor woman whose name is Mrs. G—— in this house, who is very ill?'

"'Yes, Father,' replied the boy. 'The room is at the end of that passage; papa says that she will not live to see the morning. But I think that is not her name.'

"'Oh, her name is of little consequence,' I said, as I went towards the door which the boy had pointed out to me.

"I opened it, and entered the room. I saw lying on a poor bed a woman in the agonies of death, and at her bedside sat a man of about fifty years of age, who, when I entered, stood up and seemed surprised to see a priest standing before him.

"I bowed to him, and asked him how his wife

was, ' for,' I added, ' I suppose you are Mr. G——, and that the dying woman is your wife.'

" ' No,' answered the man in the same angry tone in which the other men whom I had already met had saluted me—' no, that is not my name. But who sent for you, and what has brought you here to meddle with my family affairs ?'

" I answered that I had been requested to go that very night to see Mrs. G——, who was dying, and who desired to receive the last Sacraments. ' I, perhaps, have mistaken the street or the number of the house ; but it seems to me that I am needed here, and that it is God Himself Who has sent me, and has permitted the mistake to have happened, that this poor woman may receive the last rites of the Church before she dies.'

" ' Yes, yes, my good Father,' said the dying woman in a feeble voice. ' It is indeed God Who has sent you to me.'

" Her husband, interrupting her, cried out : ' No ! For the last ten years a priest has never dared to set his foot within my door. You shall not give my wife any of your religious rites. She belongs to me, so do not interfere with what does not concern you.'

" I replied calmly, but firmly : ' No, sir ; your wife does indeed belong to you, but she in the first place belongs to God, and you have no right over her immortal soul. If she desires to receive the Sacraments of the Church before she dies, it is my duty to administer them to her ; I will not go away unless she herself refuses to receive them.'

" These words seemed to silence the wretched

man, for he did not say another word. I went over to the bed, and said to the dying woman : ' Do you desire to receive the last Sacraments, and to be reconciled to God before you die ?'

" The poor woman raised up her hands to Heaven, and wept for joy. ' It is God Who has done all this,' she said ; ' for a long time I asked my husband to send for a priest, and he always refused to do so. It is my most ardent desire to die as a good Catholic ought to die, and to be reconciled to God, Who has had pity on me.'

" I turned towards her husband, who was standing near me, and said : ' You have heard what your wife has said to me. Be pleased to retire for a few minutes that I may hear her Confession.'

" I said these words in a tone which showed him I was resolved to do my duty. So he left the room, murmuring words of hate against our holy Faith and against me, its minister.

" ' See, my Father,' she said, as soon as he was gone, ' see what has saved me ;' and she held up in her trembling hands a Rosary, which she had concealed in the bed. ' I have had the weakness to love my husband more than my God, and to avoid quarrelling with him about religion I gave up the practice of it ten years ago. But I have never ceased to recommend myself to Our Lady. Nearly every day during those long years of neglect I said my Rosary, for I always loved the Most Holy Mother of God. It was she, no doubt, who sent you to me ; it is she who has saved my poor soul.'

" These words made tears of joy flow from my eyes. I heard her Confession, and having prepared

her to receive Holy Viaticum, I left her that I might bring it to her. On my way out I met her husband. I stretched out my hand to him, but he refused to take it, and re-entered the house in a sullen mood.

" As soon as I was in the street I remembered that 28, not 18, was the number of the house to which I had been called, so I went thither in haste, at the same time blessing God for the grace he had bestowed on the woman to whom I had gone by mistake. I found the other one awaiting me, and having heard her Confession I told her that I would soon return to give her the last Sacraments.

" When I returned to the house of my first penitent with the Blessed Sacrament I found she had just expired. She had received in the Sacrament of Penance absolution from her sins, and had no doubt by her sincere and perfect contrition supplied for the aids she would have otherwise have obtained in receiving the Sacraments of the dying."

Full of faith and gratitude towards Our Blessed Lady, the refuge of sinners and the consolation of the afflicted, the priest went to visit the other penitent, who was awaiting him, and consoled her by bestowing on her the last rites of the Church.

He returned to his house filled with consolation at the work he had been permitted to perform, and was more and more convinced of what he had ever preached and practised, that Jesus is always merciful to those who love His Mother.

THE VISION OF A SERVANT OF GOD.

A servant of God who was favoured by many favours from Heaven, on one occasion when he was

assisting the priest administering the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, saw there present Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, accompanied by a multitude of angels and Saints, who mercifully purified the dying man from the sins he had committed by the various senses of his body, and fortified him in the agony he was enduring against the attacks of the evil spirits who had come forth in great number to tempt him to despair. *Catéch. en Exemples*, No. 1906.

IV. Effects of Extreme Unction on the Body.

God is pleased, my child, sometimes to restore to the sick the health of the body through the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. This He does when He sees that it will be more expedient to the soul, and there are many living at the present day who have experienced or witnessed this wonderful effect of this Sacrament.

ST. MALACHY AND THE DYING WOMAN.

A woman who dwelt in the town of Bangor was at the point of death, and sent for St. Malachy that he might prepare her for her passage into eternity.

He went at her call to visit her, and to give her the exhortations her condition required. Then he proposed to give her the Last Sacraments. Her friends and relatives asked him to be pleased to postpone this till the next morning, when after a little rest she might be in more fit condition to receive them. The holy Bishop, much against his own desire, thought it prudent to yield to them in this matter, for he per-

ceived no signs in the invalid of the near approach of dissolution.

But the night was not far advanced when the entire household was in commotion ; tears and cries of distress were heard on all sides ; the infirm woman had died.

A messenger was despatched to the holy Bishop, who immediately hastened to the house. A glance at the body lying on the bed was enough to convince him that she was dead. Full of grief, he raised up his hands to Heaven, and accused himself before God that he alone was guilty of her dying without the Sacraments. He then knelt down and prayed with great fervour, and besought those who were in the room to do so likewise, that God might not lay this sin to his charge.

The whole night was spent in this manner, and when it was morning the onlookers were surprised to see the eyes of the deceased woman open, and her body move. Looking towards the Saint, she spoke to him, to the astonishment and joy of the people.

The Saint then administered to her the Sacrament of Extreme Unction without delay, knowing that this sacred rite has the power, not only of purifying the soul from sin, but of restoring the health of the body when God sees it expedient for the soul.

By the grace of God this latter favour was bestowed on her ; she recovered her health, and in gratitude to God she passed the remainder of her life in works of mortification and penance, that she might purify her soul more and more before God. And when God's time came to call her to Himself she died the death of the just. ST. BERNARD : *Life of St. Malachy*, c. 31.

THE PROTESTANT DOCTOR AND THE DYING CATHOLIC.

Dr. Tissot, renowned as much for his amiability as for his medical skill, was called upon to attend a patient afflicted with a dangerous illness. When he made known to her that the case was of a serious nature she fell into a state of despondency. The thought of leaving this world at so early an age filled her with grief, and the despair into which she fell was only hastening the fatal hour.

Although himself a Protestant, knowing her to be a member of the Catholic Church, he, according to his invariable custom, judged it necessary to advise her friends to send for the priest, that he might administer to her the last rites of her religion.

A priest was sent for, and on his arrival spoke to her of the seriousness of the malady from which she suffered, and the necessity of preparing herself to appear soon before God.

At first, in her dismay, she could not gather sufficient courage to yield to his desire; but as he earnestly entreated her by kind words to reconcile herself to submit to God's will, she in the end consented to begin her preparation for her journey into eternity. A peaceful calm took the place of her former despair, and she received the last Sacraments with fervour and great edification.

Next morning the doctor again called upon her, and was surprised at the change that had taken place since his previous visit. The fever had greatly diminished, and the symptoms which had so much alarmed him had nearly disappeared. In a short

time she was able to leave her bed, and became better and stronger every day.

Dr. Tissot used to speak of this event, of which he was a personal witness, with great delight, and always referred with admiration to the power of the Sacraments of the Catholic Church.

Anecdotes Chrétiennes.

HOLY ORDER

What is the Sacrament of Holy Order?

Holy Order is the Sacrament by which Bishops, priests, and other ministers of the Church are ordained, and receive power and grace to perform their sacred duties.

V. On the Dignity of the Priesthood.

The honour of the Priesthood is given directly by God Himself. St. Paul says: "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins. Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God as Aaron was" (Heb. v. 1). And Jesus Christ Himself said to His Apostles: "Amen, amen, I say to you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep. I am the door" (St. John x. 1 *et seq.*).

ST. PAULINUS'S ORDINATION.

St. Paulinus, one of the greatest men who adorned the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries, was born of parents distinguished in the world for their nobility and their wealth.

But when he began to grow up to the years of manhood, he saw how empty all earthly greatness is, and he resolved for ever to renounce the temporal goods he inherited, to secure for himself those that can never fail in eternity.

He distributed all his wealth among the poor of Christ, and embraced the monastic life. He chose the city of Barcelona as the place of his retreat, intending afterwards to return to Italy and spend the remainder of his days at the tomb of St. Felix of Nola, for whom he had always a special devotion. His greatest ambition was to become door-keeper of the church, to sweep it every day so as to preserve it from every stain of uncleanness, to keep watch in it during the night, and to spend his time in the practice of the humblest functions of the church.

But God called him to a higher dignity. One night, as he was occupied in his usual humble labours in the church—it was on Christmas Eve—the people entered in a body, and taking him by the hands, led him to the Bishop, and asked him to ordain him to the priesthood on that same festival.

Life of St. Paulinus.

ST. MARTIN AND THE PRIESTLY DIGNITY.

On one occasion St. Martin of Tours showed how great was his esteem for the priestly dignity.

Having been invited to dine with the Emperor Maximus, he found himself surrounded by the chief among the nobility of the kingdom. The Emperor placed him in the seat of honour at his right hand, and caused a priest whom he had brought along with him to be placed next to him.

When the goblet of wine was brought to the Emperor, according to custom, he, before tasting of it himself, passed it to the Saint. When he had partaken of it, instead of returning it immediately to the Sovereign as was expected of him, he handed it to the priest at his side, and only when he also had tasted it did the Bishop return it to the Emperor; for such was the esteem he had of the dignity of the priest that he considered no power on earth could equal it.

The Emperor, instead of being offended at this action of the Bishop, spoke to him in words of the highest praise; for being imbued with Christian faith, he knew that his dignity could in no way be compared to that of a priest of God.

The courtiers also, who had noted what the Bishop had done, were unanimous in applauding his noble action, which was for them a lesson, teaching them how great are the priests of God when compared with those who occupy even the highest places in the palaces of kings.

GOD'S CHOICE.

The Church of Cosmanos in the province of Pontus in Asia had lost its chief pastor by death. The clergy, in their anxiety to procure a suitable Bishop to succeed him, sent deputies to St. Gregory Thau-

maturgus, praying him to give them a pastor who might guide them in the ways of God. The Saint willingly yielded to their request, and returned with the deputies to Cosmanos.

When he asked them to bring to him those whom they thought most worthy of that dignity, the chiefs of that city brought before him some of those amongst the clergy who were distinguished by their learning and their position. But St. Gregory, who thought only of electing one conspicuous for his piety and virtue, said to them, as the Lord said to the prophet Samuel: "Look not on his countenance nor on the height of his stature; nor do I judge according to the look of man, for man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart."

One of those who was present, desiring to show that he held these words in contempt, said, in a tone of mockery: "If you wish to put aside as unworthy those whom we have chosen, and whom we consider the most eligible, and desire to choose a Bishop from among the working-classes and the lowest of the people, I counsel you to choose Alexander the charcoal-burner."

"And who is the Alexander of whom you speak in terms so slighting?" asked the Bishop. "Bring him hither."

Some of those who were present went in search of him, and in words of derision, said, as they presented him: "This is Alexander."

The man stood before the Bishop in the midst of the noble assembly. He was clad in rags from head to foot, and it was easy to know what his occupation was, from the black dust that covered

his face, his hands, and his whole person. The assembly gave way to laughter as they saw him standing before the Saint ; but he, without showing any signs of annoyance or being ashamed, stood there recollected and in great composure, which made even those who laughed at him see how resigned he was to his humble conditon in life.

St. Gregory, on looking upon him, judged that he must be a very different person from that which he appeared to be ; so, taking him aside, he besought him to make known to him who he really was.

Alexander acknowledged to the Saint that it was his own choice, and not necessity, that made him adopt his present obscure calling, and that he had adopted it as a means of practising more easily those virtues which make one pleasing to God. " I look upon this black dust that covers me and the grime that adheres to me, as a mask which keeps me from being known to those around me. I am as yet a young man, as you can see, and in a different attire I should appear even handsome ; but as this would be for me an occasion of temptation, I have adopted this employment as a safeguard to my innocence."

Gregory, taking him apart, examined him, and observing his deep learning and piety thus humbly concealed, left him in the hands of some of his attendants, at the same time giving them some private instructions what to do ; he himself then returned to the assembly in the church.

He sat for a long while there speaking to them of the duties of a Bishop and other spiritual matters, until those whom he had left with Alexander came in, leading him by the hand. They had in the mean-

time thoroughly cleansed him, and invested him with raiment belonging to St. Gregory himself.

"Do not be surprised," he said to the now astonished multitude, "if you have hitherto been deceived in this man, judging from the evidence of your senses; it was Satan himself who desired to destroy the usefulness of this vessel of election in keeping his merits concealed; but God has to-day shown us the Bishop He has chosen for you."

St. Gregory then consecrated him Bishop with the accustomed ceremonies of the Church, and then asked him to preach to the people. This he did with so much unction and zeal that they with one voice cried out: "This is indeed God's choice."

For many years he lived and laboured for the Church of God in Cosmanos, and is esteemed as one of the most pious and zealous Bishops of the third century. ST. GREG. NYS.: *Eccles. Hist.*

VI. ON THE WORK OF THE PRIEST.

The work of the priest is that of Jesus Christ Himself. He regenerates the chosen ones of God in the waters of Baptism; he purifies them in the Sacrament of Penance; he nourishes their souls with the Bread of Life in the Holy Eucharist; he consoles them in their troubles and in their sickness, and helps them to die well.

Like his Divine Master, his life is one of charity and self-sacrifice. For the salvation of his people he fears not the colds of winter, nor the heats of summer, and willingly exposes his life to danger for their sakes.

THE CHARITABLE GUIDE: A PARABLE.

It is recorded that once upon a time a certain traveller happened at nightfall to reach the borders of an immense forest, through which he was obliged to pass to reach his destination.

At this place he met a shepherd, who was leading his flocks home to the fold for the night. Of him he asked the necessary directions by which he might reach in safety the place to which he was going.

"The way which leads to the town you propose to go to," he answered, "is long and dangerous, and it will be very difficult for me to point it out to you, for the forest is intersected by so many paths that it will be almost impossible for you to find the right one. There is, indeed, one high-road which is broad and easy to walk on, but instead of bringing you thither it will lead you to a terrible abyss, into which many incautious travellers have fallen and perished."

"What is that terrible abyss of which you speak to me?" said the stranger.

"It is a steep and almost fathomless ravine, situated at the other end of this great forest. But you must also know that these thick woods are infested with all kinds of venomous reptiles and wild beasts, among the latter of which there is one in an especial manner most terrible to everyone who has occasion to traverse this forest, and we often find the remains of unfortunate people whom it has devoured. I have stationed myself here at the entrance to the forest through charity to any who

may happen to enter it by this side, that I may guide them, and caution them against these dangers of which I have told you. Follow me, therefore, and observe my instructions, if you desire to escape death and not to be overtaken by the other dangers I have mentioned."

Then, carrying in one hand a lantern, he took within the other that of his companion, and during the remainder of the night they walked together through the dark forest.

When the morning dawned, they found that they had reached without accident the farther end of the wood. It was only then the traveller came to realize the extent of the favour that his guide, the shepherd, had conferred upon him. Throughout this dangerous journey, not only had he escaped the den of the terrible beast which had already devoured so many unfortunate travellers, but he had also been preserved from a multitude of other dangers. Amongst these dangers was one greater than the rest: this was a narrow precipitous chasm, into which he must assuredly have fallen had not his charitable guide led him to a bridge by which he was able to reach the opposite side in safety. In the end, having passed through the obscure forest, he found himself on the broad highway, on which there were no more dangers, and by pursuing it he was enabled in a short time to reach the home of his friends, to which he was tending.

My child, the traveller of whom I have spoken to you is yourself; it is I also; it is every one of those whom God has made. The immense forest I have described to you is this world in which we all live.

The wild beasts and reptiles that dwell in that forest are the enemies of our souls, and the terrible monster which destroyed so many people is Satan himself.

The abyss which the stranger escaped, through the kindness and watchfulness of his guide, is Hell itself, and the paths by which he was led to the end of his journey are those of piety, charity, justice, and purity. The charitable guide is not only your angel guardian, who is, indeed, always near you, though invisibly present, but is in a particular manner the priest, whom God has given you to be your visible guide, to instruct you in the way you should go, and to direct your feet in the paths of His commandments, until you reach your home far beyond the dark forest of this life—the Kingdom of God your Father.

Listen, then, my child, to the words of the priest, who is the representative of Jesus Christ to you, that you may one day reach the home in Heaven for which you were made. *Catéchisme Pratique*, p. 4.

A SOLDIER-PRIEST.

Father Capella had been a brave cavalry officer under Don Carlos; afterwards he exchanged the sword for the Crucifix, and took charge of a humble parish in the suburbs of Paris. All his parishioners loved and venerated him, and when his last illness came, they were overwhelmed with sorrow.

The last rites of the Church had been administered to him, and the end was hourly expected, when someone happened to speak of one of his parishioners

that was also dying, and who refused to see the priest that had been sent for

"Unhappy man!" exclaimed Father Capella. "Were I not dying, perhaps he would not refuse to see me."

"I am sure he would not," was the reply. "He esteems you very highly, as we all do."

The curé's face brightened up; he formed a sudden resolution. Calling his attendants, he ordered them to dress him; but they looked at him in amazement, fearing his mind was wandering. He repeated the command in a firm voice, and they reluctantly obeyed. Then he told them to ask the priest whose ministrations had been refused, to bring to the house of the dying man all that was necessary for the administration of the Sacraments. "And I want you to carry me there, he said." They did so, although fearing every moment that he would breathe his last.

When he reached the bedside of the patient, Father Capella said:

"My friend, we are both about to appear before God; shall we not make the journey together? Will you not confess to me?"

The sufferer kissed the hand of his pastor in token of assent, and the dying men were left alone. When the Confession was over, they guided the curé's hand while he administered Extreme Unction and gave the last blessing. Then in a feeble voice he intoned the *Nunc Dimittis*—"Now do Thou dismiss Thy servant in peace." An hour later Father Capella was in the light of his Master's presence.

THE PRIEST AND GOD'S LITTLE ONES.

It is chiefly by forming the hearts of little children that they are prepared to be good citizens for society, good Christians for the Church of God on earth, and Saints for the Church triumphant.

It is recorded that a certain traveller, having risen early in the morning to set out on a long journey, was surprised at seeing, standing at the door of a village church, a group of children, who seemed full of gaiety and happiness. As he was looking towards them, he saw that their joy suddenly increased, and they all at once began to cry out : " Here he comes ! here he comes !"

On turning round, he saw a venerable priest approaching the church, his face covered with smiles, and his whole appearance inspiring confidence. The children ran towards him, each one striving who would be nearest to him, some seizing him by the hand, others clinging to his garments, and all overjoyed at seeing him.

The stranger, in his astonishment, stood for a few moments contemplating the scene ; then, approaching the priest, he saluted him, and, taking him aside, he asked him how he had been able to inspire these children with so great an affection and so intense an attachment to himself, and how it was possible for him to gather together so many of them at that early hour to attend Catechism and instructions, when naturally they would prefer to be elsewhere.

" Oh, it is not difficult !" the priest answered. " My method is simplicity itself. I love every one

of these children sincerely, and they know this well; and they, one and all, are attached to me. I never say a harsh word to them, because they are careful never to deserve it. I mingle little interesting examples with my instructions to them, and they delight to listen to them. They try to imitate the models thus placed before them, and the consequence is that they not only learn the doctrines of Faith more easily, and retain them more perfectly, but also, by the practice of them, they will grow up pious and devout Christians."

VII. On the Respect due to the Priest.

ST. FRANCIS ASSISI'S RESPECT FOR THE PRIESTHOOD.

As St. Francis was one day conversing with some of his brethren on the respect due to priests, he said these words: "If I should happen to meet on the way an angel and a priest walking together I would salute the priest in the first place, and then the angel."

And, seeing that some of them desired to know the reason of this, he added: "I would salute the priest in the first place because he is the representative of Jesus Christ Himself, whereas the angel, great as he is, is only His servant."

HUNERICUS PERSECUTES THE CLERGY.

In the days of Hunericus, the Emperor who persecuted the Church in the days of the heresiarchs, the faithful of Carthage were amongst those who suffered most at his hands. The clergy especially

were the objects of his relentless hatred. He caused them all, to the number of about five hundred, to be scourged, beaten with rods, and finally banished into exile.

On their way to the place of banishment, the people of the city accompanied their Bishops and the priests, with lighted tapers in their hands, in testimony of their respect and admiration of them. The women especially were loud in their lamentations. With their little children in their arms and at their side, they followed their pastors, and in the midst of their tears and sobs they cried out: "Who will take care of us now, when you leave us to receive the crown of martyrdom? Who will now baptize our children? Who will now deliver us from our sins? Who will now assist us at the hour of death, and bless our last resting-place? And who will now offer up for us the Divine Sacrifice, and distribute to us the Bread of Life? Oh! would to God that we could accompany you to exile and to death!"

You need not be astonished, my child, to read this account of the sincere regret of the Christians of Carthage in seeing their pastors taken from them. To those who have a lively faith there is nothing so deplorable as to be deprived of their pastors, whom God has made the dispensers of the Mysteries of God to them. *St. Victor Vit.* ii., p. 93.

THE CHILDREN CONFESSORS OF CARTHAGE.

When Hunericus banished the Bishops and priests of Carthage into exile, nothing could be compared to the zeal and the courage of the Chris-

tians of that city, young and old, in defending them, and in the manifestations of their veneration and love for them.

Amongst these were twelve children who were accustomed to minister to them at the altar, and who, in their sweet, angelic voices, used to sing the praises of God during the holy Offices of the Church. These young children willingly left the homes of their parents to accompany them into their exile in Africa, that they might still continue to minister to them.

When the Arians learned that they had gone with their spiritual fathers, and regretting that they should be deprived of their assistance, for they knew the great talents they possessed, they ran after them to bring them back by force.

But these devoted children refused to return with them, notwithstanding the bribes that were offered them. They clung to the robes of their saintly masters, and suffered with joy the cruel torments the inhuman Arians inflicted upon them, and despised even the threats of death and the sight of the naked swords unsheathed to frighten them.

And when at length they were taken by force and carried back to Carthage, they adhered faithfully to their holy religion ; not even one amongst them ever yielded to the commands of their persecutors, notwithstanding all the promises made to them, and the punishments with which they were threatened.

When the days of persecution had passed by, and peace was restored to the Church, these children, now grown up, became the consolation and the

glory of the Church of Africa; they continued to remain together in Carthage, singing as before the praises of God in His sanctuary. The whole province looked upon these twelve confessors as so many apostles, who by their former constancy and their present devotion to the services of the Church, taught them in practice that the true Christian ought to sacrifice everything and suffer everything rather than deny his Faith, or separate himself from the pastors whom God has placed over them, to guide them to their home in Heaven.

Hist. of the Church.

XLVIII

MATRIMONY

I. Why this Sacrament was Instituted.

Matrimony, my child, is the Sacrament which sanctifies the contract of a Christian marriage, and gives a special grace to those who receive it worthily.

God calls most of His earthly children to the holy state of matrimony. St. Paul calls the union of man and wife a great sacrament, and many of God's Saints have received the crown of life in Heaven because, while they were in this world, they served God perfectly in this state, and because they had embraced it to accomplish His Holy Will, and to fulfil the end for which He had made them.

The following examples will show you, my child, to what a high degree of sanctity some of the Saints reached by fulfilling the duties of this holy state with fidelity.

THE MARRIAGE OF TOBIAS AND SARA.

The Holy Scriptures contain a beautiful account of the marriage of Tobias and Sara. It is written for those whom God has called to that holy state that

they may have an example of how their lives should be ordered so that they may obtain the blessings of God for themselves and their children.

" And Tobias said to the angel : ' Where wilt thou that we lodge ?'

" And the angel, answering him, said : ' Here is one whose name is Raguel, a near kinsman of thy tribe, and he hath a daughter called Sara, but he hath no son, nor any other daughter beside her. And his substance is due to thee, and thou must take her to wife. Ask her therefore of her father, and he will give her thee to wife.'

" Then Tobias answered, and said : ' I hear that she hath been given to seven husbands, and they all died : moreover I have heard, that a devil killed them. Now I am afraid, lest the same thing should happen to me also : and whereas I am the only child of my parents, I should bring down their old age with sorrow to hell.'

" Then the Angel Raphael said to him : ' Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the Devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their minds . . . over them the Devil hath power. But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days . . . give thyself to nothing but to prayers with her. . . . And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord . . . that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children.'

" And they went into Raguel, and Raguel received them with joy. And Raguel looking on Tobias, said

to Anna his wife: 'How like is this young man to my cousin?'

"And when he had spoken these words, he said: 'Whence are ye young men our brethren?'

"But they said: 'We are of the tribe of Nephthali, of the captivity of Ninive.'

"And Raguel said to them: 'Do you know Tobias my brother?' And they said: 'We know him.'

"And when he was speaking many good things of him, the angel said to Raguel: 'Tobias, concerning whom thou inquirest, is this young man's father.'

"And Raguel went to him, and kissed him with tears, and weeping upon his neck, said: 'A blessing be upon thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and most virtuous man.' And Anna his wife, and Sara their daughter wept.

"And after they had spoken, Raguel commanded a sheep to be killed, and feast to be prepared. And when he desired them to sit down to dinner, Tobias said: 'I will not eat nor drink here this day, unless thou first grant me my petition: and promise to give me Sara thy daughter.'

"Now, when Raguel heard this he was afraid, knowing what had happened to those seven husbands, that went in unto her: and he began to fear lest it might happen to him also in like manner: and as he was in suspense, and gave no answer to his petition, the angel said to him: 'Be not afraid to give her to this man, for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife: therefore another could not have her.'

" Then Raguel said : ' I doubt not but God hath regarded my prayers and tears in His sight. And I believe that He hath therefore made you come to me, that this maid might be married to one of her own kindred, according to the law of Moses : and now doubt not but I will give her to thee.'

" And taking the right hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying : ' The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He join you together, and fulfil His blessing in you.'

" And taking paper they made a writing of the marriage. And afterwards they made merry, blessing God.

" And Raguel called to him Anna his wife . . . and she brought Sara her daughter in thither, and she wept. And she said to her : ' Be of good cheer, my daughter : the Lord of Heaven give thee joy for the trouble thou hast undergone.'

" And after they had supped, they brought in the young man to her. . . . Then Tobias exhorted the virgin, and said to her : ' Sara, arise, and let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day : because for these three nights we are joined to God : but when the third night is over we will be in our own wedlock. For we are the children of the Saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God.' So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together, that health might be given them.

" Then Tobias called the angel to him (whom he thought to be a man), and said to him : ' Brother Azarias, I pray thee hearken to my words. . . . I

beseech thee to take with thee beasts and servants, and go to Gabelus to Rages the city of the Medes: . . . and desire him to come to my wedding.'

" And when he (Gabelus) was come in to Raguel's house, he found Tobias sitting at the table: and he leapt up, and they kissed each other: and Gabelus wept and blessed God, and said: ' The God of Israel bless thee, because thou art the son of a very good and just man, and that feareth God, and doth almsdeeds: and may a blessing come upon thy wife and upon your parents. And may you see your children, and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations: and may your seed be blessed by the God of Israel Who reigneth for ever and ever.'

" And when all had said ' Amen:' they went to the feast: but the marriage feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord." *Tobias* vi., *seq.*

Many devout young women, knowing how much greater in the sight of God is the state of holy virginity than that of marriage, have hoped that they might be found worthy to be among the chosen ones of Our Lord, to be his spouses on earth and to follow Him in Heaven " wherever He goeth." But the majority of them are not chosen for this state; on the contrary, it is the will of God that most of His elect should live in the sacred bonds of Holy Marriage, that they may be the instruments in His hands for increasing the number of His saints in Heaven, and for the magnifying of His own glory in the habitation of His elect.

THE PRAYER OF A DEVOUT SERVANT OF GOD.

A devout servant of God, who lived in modern times, desired in her younger years to consecrate herself to God in the religious life. For this purpose she went to the Superioress of the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul, in company with her mother, and besought her to receive her as one of her spiritual children, for her whole soul was inflamed with the desire of helping the poor in their distress, which is the special end of that Institute.

The Reverend Mother received her very kindly, and, after a long interview, answered her, undoubtedly inspired by the Divine Spirit, that it was not God's Holy Will that she should serve Him in their Order. So she returned home, resolved to become a saint in the world, since she was not called by God to become one in the solitude of the cloister.

Seeing now that it was the Will of God that she should follow the more beaten track of the secular life, and thinking, in her humility, that God had rejected her because of her unworthiness to become His spouse, she daily said to Him: "Since it is Thy Holy Will, I will enter into the holy state of matrimony; but I beseech Thee bestow on me a great number of children, and may they all grow up saints, consecrated to Thee."

God, Who never allows Himself to be surpassed in generosity, had chosen for this soul of election a virtuous young man, and in due course the marriage was celebrated in a church dedicated to Our Lady. Their union was blessed by a numerous

offspring, who were brought up from their infancy in the fear and love of God.

If all who feel themselves called by God to the married state should imitate this example, how much heavenly joy and peace would reign in their homes. They would then resemble the heavenly Jerusalem, which St. John describes in the Apocalypse: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them: and they shall be His people: and God Himself with them shall be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." *Apoc.* xxi. 3, 4.

THE MARRIAGE OF ST. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND.

About eight hundred and fifty years ago a little Princess was born in the palace of the King of Hungary. Her parents gave her the name of Margaret, which means a pearl; and it would seem as if God had inspired them to bestow that name on her to signify how brightly she would one day shine in His Church on earth, and how gloriously she would afterwards reign among His saints in Heaven.

Margaret spent the first eight or nine years of her life in the Hungarian Court. We need not be surprised to read that she became a great saint, for she was surrounded from her infancy with those who were saints. Everything spoke to her of God and Heaven, and the first use she made of her reason was to consecrate her heart to God, to do His Holy Will as long as she lived.

It was about this time that the saintly Edward the Confessor mounted the English throne. When he had established peace throughout the kingdom,

he sent ambassadors to Hungary to invite Edward and his children to England. When they arrived, they were received with every mark of honour and affection, and for three years they lived with Edward in London as happily as they had done with Stephen in Hungary.

But it happened, in the year 1057, that Edward, the father of our Saint, died suddenly. A few years afterwards St. Edward the Confessor also died. Edgar, Margaret's brother, was now the lawful heir to the throne ; but as he was very young and had been born in a foreign country, a certain Count called Harold came forward at the head of a powerful army and seized upon the crown.

In the meantime another powerful rival appeared, who also asserted his right to it : this was William, Duke of Normandy. He invaded England in the year 1066, and, having slain Harold in the Battle of Hastings, proclaimed himself King of England.

Edgar frequently tried to maintain his rights, but as those who supported him were few in number, they were easily put to flight by the powerful army of the Conqueror.

When he saw that his cause was hopeless, and that his own life, as well as the lives of his friends, were in danger so long as he remained in England, Edgar secretly left the country, with the intention of returning to Hungary, the land of his birth. This was in the autumn of the year 1068. He was accompanied by his mother and sisters, and as many of his friends as chose to follow him and share with him his exile.

They had not proceeded far on their voyage when

there arose a sudden and terrible tempest. The ship was soon driven from its course, and tossed to and fro by the angry billows. For many days the royal fugitives were exposed to the danger of being buried beneath the waters. "But the providence of God," says the ancient chronicler, "was watching over them : they were carried on towards the Scottish shores, and landed in safety on the coast of Fife."

Malcolm, the King of Scotland, was at that time in his castle at Dunfermline, about three miles distant. When he was informed of what had happened, and heard who the noble strangers were who were thus cast into his kingdom, "he rose up in great haste," continues the chronicler, "and put on his royal robes ; then, accompanied by his nobles and attendants, went forth in person to meet them. And when it was announced to them that the King was coming, they also quickly arrayed themselves in the robes of State they had brought with them from England, and when the King arrived, they appeared before him clad in a magnificence which astonished all the people.

"The King then, standing in the midst of his nobles, saluted them with much courtesy, and bade them welcome. 'You must come with me to my castle,' he said, 'that you may find the repose you need so much, after the sufferings of your terrible voyage. My home shall be your home, and all I have shall be at your disposal, so long as it shall please you to remain in my kingdom.'

"The fugitives gladly accepted the invitation of the good King, and returned with him to Dunfermline."

Two years passed by, and the exiled family were still in Scotland. They found in Malcolm's kingdom that peace which was denied to them in their own. And Margaret, whose delight was to live in solitude, found in the hills and wooded valleys of Fifeshire many solitary places where she could speak to her Heavenly Spouse without fear of being interrupted.

There is near Dunfermline a little grotto, which even at the present day is known by the name of St. Margaret's Cave. It was there, as in a convent cell, that Margaret spent most of her time alone with God and His holy angels. The King used to see her going towards this cave early every morning, and he wondered what she did there all the day. So one morning he followed her at a distance to watch her ; and when he saw her kneel down before the rude cross she had set up, and beheld her as she gazed up to Heaven, and seemed to him as if she saw with her bodily eyes the home of the Blessed, he was filled with awe and admiration. The whole scene appeared to him as a vision from the other world.

But as time went on there arose in the King's heart a more tender feeling towards Margaret. Her beauty and her holy life made him desire a closer union with her than that of mere friendship. " Oh, if I could only obtain her hand in marriage," he thought, " how happy I should be, and what blessings would come through her to my kingdom !"

He had not the courage of himself to ask her to become his wife. How could he hope that she, so holy and so anxious to live in pious seclusion, would ever consent to become the spouse of one whose

home was on the field of battle, and whose hands had shed so much blood?

But he knew the influence her mother and Edgar possessed over her, so he went to them and asked them to speak to her on his behalf. They were filled with joy at the proposal of the King: it was an honour they had never dared to hope for; and they promised him that they would readily undertake to obtain Margaret's consent.

But when they found her, and saluted her as Queen of Scotland, "a sudden paleness overspread her countenance," says the historian, "and she trembled at their words." To be united to a man who was naturally so fierce, and of manners so different from her own, made the pious Margaret shudder. She answered them that it was impossible for her to consent to such a union, and that she had already given her heart to God, Whom alone she desired to love. "I had hoped to be the spouse of Jesus Christ," she said.

But her mother and brother continued to press her to consent. They showed her the great honour done to them by the King in choosing her to be Queen of Scotland, and how ungrateful it would be in her, after so many favours, to disappoint him.

Margaret, after a few minutes' silence, asked them to grant her some delay, that she might ask God to direct her.

Long and fervently did she pray. "O my God," she said, "behold I am in Thy hands; do with me what Thou wilt. I desire only one thing: the accomplishment of Thy Holy Will. Thou knowest that I have already given my heart to Thee to love

Thee alone ; but if Thou callest me to another state, O my God, I am ready."

Her prayer was speedily answered. She rose up from her knees and went to find her mother. " My mother," she said, with calm resignation, " it is the Will of God ; I consent to accept the King as my husband."

There was great joy among the people of Scotland when it became known that Margaret was to be their Queen, for the fame of her holy life had already reached the most distant parts of the kingdom. The marriage was celebrated in the year 1070 at Dunfermline, with great pomp and solemnity, and in commemoration of that great event the new Queen founded a great church in that city, which was dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity.

Life of St. Margaret

II. On the Greatness and Excellence of Matrimony.

The Sacrament of Matrimony gives to those who receive it worthily a special grace, to enable them to bear the difficulties of their state, to love and be faithful to one another, and to bring up their children in the fear of God.

THE DESPONSATION OF OUR LADY TO ST. JOSEPH.

The most holy marriage that has ever taken place in this world was, without doubt, that of Our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph. The Holy Scriptures, in recording this marriage, do not enter into details concerning it ; but tradition has handed down to

us edifying legends which many of God's saints have loved to meditate on, and which the most celebrated painters of religious pictures have made the subject of their most famous productions.

According to the ancient custom of the Jews, Mary was espoused to St. Joseph at the age of fourteen, and the marriage took place during the time of her residence in the Temple.

When the High-priest Abiathar announced to her that the time had arrived when she should be espoused, Our Lady refused, saying that, since she had entirely consecrated herself to God, soul and body, she desired to belong to Him alone in life and in death.

Then the High-priest prayed to God to direct him how he should act towards that young virgin who thus went against the customs and traditions of her race.

And the Lord made known to him that He ratified in Heaven the vow of consecration she had made of herself to Him. Then the High-priest rose up in the midst of the assembly, and said: "Since it has pleased God to make choice of a new way for this young virgin to serve Him, it behoves us to choose a man who may be her protector, and to whose care she may be entrusted."

Again the High-priest prayed to the Lord to guide him in this choice. And God answered him, saying: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of this root; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (Isa. xi. 1).

In obedience to these words, the High-priest com-

manded that all the unmarried men of the House of David should come to the Temple, and, bringing with them rods, should place them on the altar, and that he to whom belonged that rod which should bud and flourish, and on which a dove should rest (the symbol of the Holy Ghost), should take the virgin to wife.

This was done, and, wonderful to relate, the rod of Joseph immediately produced buds and flowers, and a dove of spotless whiteness reposed upon it. To his care, therefore, was committed that pious Virgin who from all eternity had been destined to be the Mother of the Redeemer of the world. The marriage was celebrated with due solemnity, and the Church commemorates the Feast of Our Lady's Desponsation on January 23 every year

SCHMIDT: *Rep. de Catéch.*, vol ii. 6.

THE MARRIAGE-FEAST OF CANA

St. John thus describes the marriage-feast at Cana, at which Jesus performed His first miracle:

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus was also invited, and His disciples, to the marriage.

"And the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus saith to Him: 'They have no wine.'

"And Jesus saith to her: 'Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.' And His mother saith to the waiters: 'Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.'

"Now there were set there six waterpots of

stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece.

" Jesus saith to them : ' Fill the waterpots with water ;' and they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus said to them : ' Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast.' And they carried it.

" And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water, the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him : ' Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

" This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee : and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." *St. John* ii. 1, *seq.*

III. The Duties of the Father and the Mother in the Christian Home.

To bring up their children in the love and fear of God is the first duty God has imposed on the father and mother—not on the mother only, but on the father and the mother.

It is true that the mother, especially in the early and tender years of the child, has the greater duty of implanting in it the true Christian spirit, and of introducing it into the Christian life. Nevertheless, the training of a child will not be accomplished if the Christian mother has not a Christian husband to put his hand to the work and assist her. The

Lord has not entrusted the child to the father only, or to the mother only, but to the father and the mother together.

THE GREAT SAINT OF THE FAMILY LIFE.

Although the great St. Frances of Rome most ardently desired to consecrate herself to God in the religious life, God made known to her, through the voice of her Confessor, that such was not His Divine will concerning her, but that He had appointed for her the state of holy marriage, that by serving Him therein with great fidelity she might become an example to others for their imitation.

When she knew that this was the Will of God, she obeyed without hesitation, and thus became to generations yet unborn the model of a Christian wife and mother. She was subject to her husband in all things, and considered the care of her family her first and most important duty. Yet in the midst of these continual works she found the means of communing with God, and thus was able to join together the active and the contemplative life.

She chose for herself two solitary places, one in the upper part of her house, and the other in a cavern in the garden ; and to these places she loved to retire when the affairs of her household permitted her, that she might converse alone with God.

It was in this way she became a saint ; and many who have followed her example have gained for themselves the crown of glory in Heaven promised by God to those who have done His Holy Will on earth, and accomplished the work He had given them to do.

MANSI : *Dis.* viii. **2.**

A TRULY CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

A certain holy priest, full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, used frequently to relate the following story :

" It was in the year 1847. In visiting my flock, I entered the house of a truly Christian family, and was edified beyond expression by the peace and the joyous and pure happiness that reigned there—a happiness which rose from the faithful fulfilment of the duties of religion more than from the riches of the world or the possession of its goods.

" This family consisted of the father, the mother, and one son, who was his parents' glory and joy. Endowed with excellent natural qualities, the young man shone among his fellow-students by the splendid progress he made in his studies, and at the same time by that which was of infinitely more consequence—the regularity of his conduct and the generosity of his character, which made him universally esteemed and beloved.

" No inducement which the world could offer him would ever cause him to stain, even in the smallest degree, the purity of his conscience. He had engraved on his heart those beautiful words he had so often heard fall from his parents' lips : ' My child, God has bestowed on you great and precious talents, but ever bear in mind that it is your duty, in return, to consecrate them entirely to His service. We sincerely pray to Him that He would be pleased to take you from us if He foresaw that you would make bad use of His gifts, or employ them for any other purpose than for His honour and glory.'

" His parents were at that time already advanced in age, but they used to declare that the most precious inheritance they had received from their parents was their faith and their virtues.

" ' My father lived,' said that truly Christian mother, ' more than seventy years, and at that advanced age he used to repeat to us what he had so often said to us all our lifetime—" Love God above all things ; never speak any ill of your neighbour ; never injure anyone, but do to everyone as you would desire others to do to you." '

" His father loved also to speak of his own venerable father. He was eighty years old when he died. During the last days of his long life, he was accustomed frequently to leave his house, but it was always to visit God in His church. The rest of the time he spent at home in prayer.

" ' God has given me a long life, and a happy one,' he would say, ' and I wish to show Him how grateful I am by consecrating entirely to Him the short time that still remains to me on earth.'

" This truly Christian family, by the peace that reigned among them, and the odour of their virtues, offered a perfect image of Paradise. Oh ! how many families in the Church of God would enjoy a similar blessing if parents only fufilled the duties of their state of life !" SCHOUPPE, ii. 491.

IV. ON THE DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE.

The most important and the most honourable position in life, after the supereminent dignity of the priesthood, is that of the married state. And

Christ has established in His Church this great Sacrament, as St. Paul calls it, that those who live therein may receive those supernatural graces which are necessary to enable them to live devoutly and piously.

ST. PAUL'S INSTRUCTION ON MATRIMONY.

In the fifth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, he writes: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the Head of the Church. He is the saviour of his body. Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it; that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church. Because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh

"This is a great Sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in his Church.

"Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself, and let the wife fear her husband."

ST. MONICA, THE MODEL SPOUSE AND MOTHER

St. Monica is regarded by the Church as the model of a Christian spouse and mother. Her husband, who was at first a pagan, had many faults, and her son had wandered far from the path of virtue. But by her prayers and confidence in God, as well as by her sighs and tears, she had the consolation of seeing them both become models of perfection.

In the first place, having herself been brought up in piety from her childhood, and having been accustomed always to live in humble submission to her father and mother, she did not find it difficult to submit to the authority of her husband, whose word was law to her, and offered up to God the annoyances which this caused her, in order that she might obtain his conversion.

At first she never spoke to him about religious matters, but endeavoured, by her conduct and good example, to make known to him the maxims it proclaimed. In this way she endeared herself more and more to him, and made herself more and more worthy of his respect. And when he at times committed great faults, or treated her harshly, she bore all with patience and without a murmur, and never showed by word or action the interior pain she suffered, and was always pleased to have such an opportunity of offering up to God a new act of mortification, to procure from Him her husband's conversion. Although of a kindly disposition, he was easily led into violent passions ; but she had made it a rule never to manifest any sign of annoy-

ance at these moments, and never to utter even one harsh word of reproach, but waited until he resumed his usual calm, when she would, in charity, remind him of what he had said or done in words of sweetness and deference.

God at length gave him the grace of the true Faith, which he embraced with fervour and gratitude, and practised with fidelity. When the hour of his departure came, he calmly resigned his soul into the hands of God; and until the time of her happy death, Monica seemed never to weary in praying for his eternal repose. *From her Life.*

The Apostle St. Paul, in speaking of this great Sacrament, says that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and often, even at the present day, is the pious wife the cause of the conversion of a husband who has gone astray from the path of duty.

SHE PERSEVERED IN PRAYER, AND IT WAS GRANTED.

A missionary Father of the Diocese of Cambrai relates the following example:

One day, when he was giving the exercises of a Mission in one of the chief parishes of the diocese, a man came to him and besought him to hear his Confession. "My Father," he began, "it is now thirty years since I have gone to the Sacraments. I have, indeed, been very wretched all that time, but now I wish to change my life, and beg of you to hear my Confession."

The penitent knelt down and confessed all the sins he had committed during these many years,

with tears of repentance, and in the sentiment of deep contrition. The priest thanked God with his whole heart for this miracle of His grace.

" My Father," said the now happy man, when he had finished his Confession, " it is to the prayers of my wife that I owe my conversion. She is indeed a great saint. During these thirty years she has never ceased to urge me to begin a new life, in words which spoke her affection for me; and although I did not follow her advice, she never became discouraged. Eight days ago, when the Mission began, she again asked me to begin to lead a good life, and to take the present opportunity of returning to God. I once more refused her advice, this time with angry words.

" This morning she returned to the charge. ' Go to Confession,' she said hurriedly; ' the missionary is waiting for you. I have been praying for your conversion for the last thirty years; it is time now that you should return to God. Go at once to Confession.'

" The only answer I made was to abuse her more than ever, and finally I struck her. Then I went out.

" When I came back at midday, she met me at the door. There was no sign of displeasure on her countenance—there was even a sweet smile upon her face—and she did not even whisper a word about how I had treated her in the morning. But I saw tears amidst her smiles, and I saw also—to my shame, I say it—the marks of the wounds I gave her on her brow. I said nothing, but I felt a strange sentiment of emotion in my soul. I reflected on my

past conduct towards her, her patience towards me, and my ingratitude towards my God. 'O wretched man,' I said to myself, 'your wife is an angel, and you are worse than a murderer. You never cease heaping upon her injury upon injury. And why? Only because she wants you to go to Confession. And is she not right? See, during these last thirty years you have been more like a brute than a man. This very night you will go to the missionary.' And here I am. Father, be pleased to hear my Confession." *L'Apostolat de la Prière*, p. 180.

V. On Mixed Marriages.

A mixed marriage is a marriage between a Catholic and one who, though baptized, does not profess the Catholic Faith. The Church has always forbidden mixed marriages, and considered them unlawful and pernicious; yet she sometimes permits them, by granting a dispensation, for very grave reasons and under special conditions.

A PRAYER HEARD AND ANSWERED.

A certain Turk had fallen in love with a Bulgarian girl, fifteen years of age, who had been brought up piously in the Catholic Faith, and he earnestly desired to marry her.

He used every means he could conceive to persuade her to consent to his proposal. But she always refused, because she feared—and with reason, too—that such a union would place her in the danger of losing her faith.

The Mohammedan, seeing that all his efforts were

without avail, resolved to obtain her as his wife by force, or bring about her destruction. Her only answer was that she would rather forfeit her life than expose her faith to danger.

The infidel then brought forward false witnesses, who testified that they had heard her declare that not only would she espouse him, but that she would renounce Christianity and embrace the religion of Mohammed.

She, on hearing these accusations, strenuously denied them, and was filled with grief at the thought of being considered capable of such an awful sin. The judge pronounced her guilty, and sent her to prison. Her mother obtained permission to accompany her.

There, full of assurance that God would never forsake those who trusted in Him, the girl prayed to Him with confidence, saying frequently: "My Saviour and My God, Thou knowest that I belong entirely to Thee. Deliver me, I beseech Thee, from this danger, or take me to Thyself."

Her prayer was heard. On the second day after her committal to prison God took her to His heavenly Kingdom.

The prison guards beheld a brilliant light in the dungeon where she had been imprisoned, and, entering, they found her dead. This sight filled them with so much terror that they rushed into the streets, and in a very short time the news was noised abroad on every side. Many of the people, on hearing of it, ran to the prison, and were eye-witnesses of what had occurred.

The Turks, struck with astonishment, cut into

pieces the clothing she wore, through reverence for her virtue; and the missionary who relates this story adds that, even to the present day, they religiously preserve them as relics.

Mentor du jeune âge.

VI. On the Christian Preparation for Matrimony.

My child, if a person desires to receive from God the great graces attached to this Sacrament, he must be very careful not to imitate so many around him, who think of nothing else but worldly things when about to marry. "They are of the world," says Jesus Christ, "and therefore of the world do they speak." But he should remember that he is the child of his Father in Heaven, and should imitate those who have gone before him, who are now among the Saints. "We are the children of the Saints," said Tobias to his espoused wife, "and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God."

A mother's commendable prudence.

A young doctor who resided in Paris received the Sacrament of Matrimony (in the Month of October, 1829) with edifying devotion. One of his friends had some time previously introduced him to a certain family, of great respectability and piety, in the hope that in due course he would obtain the hand of the only daughter, equally renowned for her edifying life. The two young persons soon became enamoured of each other, and before long a promise

of marriage was agreed to, the parents of the young lady being satisfied with the edifying conduct of the doctor and his future prospects of a promising career.

The day of the marriage was at length fixed, and the bridegroom, a short time before it arrived, went to the mother of his future spouse to ask her permission to have a conversation in private with her daughter, for she had never yet been permitted to speak with him alone.

"I cannot possibly consent to grant what you ask," said her mother in reply. "Emily has been somewhat indisposed for two days past, and requires repose."

"But, madam," he said, "does it not seem rather strange that you should not permit her to see me for a short time alone? Although we are engaged to each other, I have never seen or spoken to her but in the presence of others. I have never had the opportunity of making known to her privately my sentiments in her regard, nor of knowing what hers are towards me."

The mother answered: "Your anxiety to see and speak to her in the manner you desire causes me to feel displeased, for I cannot permit it."

"I have, however," he insisted, "a very important communication to make to her."

"If so," was her answer, "I will send for her, and she can speak to you in my presence; for my daughter has never been, nor shall ever be, while under my roof, alone with any man."

"But in a very short time she will be my wife."

"Yes," she replied; "when she is your wife, she

will belong to you, not to me. Until then I must fulfil towards her my duty as a prudent and Christian mother."

"Since this is your determination," he replied, "I must confide to yourself what I wanted to say to her. I myself have been brought up by virtuous parents, and I have always been faithful to that holy religion which has dictated to you so much prudence and wisdom. The indifference which is, alas! so general amongst those of my profession has perhaps inspired you with a certain diffidence in me. But far from adopting the sentiments of these unworthy men, I make it my glory, as it is my consolation, to practise faithfully the duties of my religion. If I desired so anxiously to speak to your daughter in private, it was because I wanted to know if she shared in these sentiments inspired by faith, and to ask her to prepare for this great Sacrament, as I intend to do, by a general Confession and the worthy reception of Holy Communion, that we may receive with the nuptial blessing all the graces attached to it."

The happy mother at these words burst into tears, and, throwing her arms around her future son-in-law, pressed him to her heart, saying: "Yes, my son, we will all go to Communion together on that day. Go and speak to my daughter, and tell her that I have called you my son. Those sentiments you have expressed will be to me a perfect assurance of your own happiness, as well as that of Emily."

On the eight days immediately preceding the day of the nuptials the pious doctor caused the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to be offered up to obtain from

God an abundance of His heavenly blessings, and on the morning of the marriage the bridegroom and bride knelt at the Holy Table, accompanied by their worthy parents and relatives.

My child, this example should be read again and again by all those whom God calls to the holy state of marriage. How different would the world be at the present day if this beautiful example were imitated by all God's children !

Le Dogme et la morale.

A MARRIAGE REPLETE WITH HEAVENLY BENEDICTIONS.

During the time of the Crusades a young Englishman of the name of Gilbert was inspired to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, along with his servant Richard, in the hope that he might aid the soldiers of the Cross to rescue the holy places from the hands of the infidels. But they had scarcely set foot in the Holy Land when they were captured, loaded with chains, and cast into prison by the Saracens, where they were confined for a year and a half, and condemned to suffer the most atrocious sufferings.

Gilbert had, however, less to suffer than many of the other captives, because the Prince under whose charge he was, perceived that he had acquired a good education, and showed in his whole demeanour great prudence and matured intelligence, which caused him to treat him with less severity, and even with a kind of reverence.

This Saracen Prince had a daughter, who was filled with admiration at the conduct of Gilbert,

and was in a marvellous manner attracted towards him by his virtuous behaviour. For a long time she sought for an opportunity to converse with him ; and on one occasion, finding him alone, she accosted him, inquired whence he came, and what religion he professed.

" I am an Englishman," he answered, " and belong to the Catholic Religion."

" And what does your Religion teach ?" she asked.

Gilbert then explained to her in a few words the principal mysteries of our Holy Faith, especially those of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, at the same time telling her that the only means of saving one's soul was to believe in them and to profess them.

The Princess, on whom God had special designs of mercy, listened to his words with the greatest joy, and found so much consolation in his conversation that she did not fail, on every possible opportunity, to visit him. Gilbert, on his part, received her with the greatest kindness, mixed with due modesty and reserve, and spoke to her with so much dignity on the subject of our holy mysteries, of the pleasure and the happiness of belonging to Jesus Christ, and of serving Him, that one day, when he was speaking with more than ordinary fervour, she said to him : " You seem to love with great affection that Jesus Christ of Whom you tell me so many and such beautiful things ; but would you be willing to suffer and die for Him ?"

At these words a suspicion came into the mind of Gilbert that perhaps she was acting, in concert with the Prince her father, to make him renounce

his Religion. But, animated by the spirit of faith that burned so brightly in his soul, he answered with great firmness : " Yes, I love my Lord Jesus Christ ; I love Him so much that my one desire is to see the hearts of all mankind enflamed with love for Him ; and it would be my greatest joy to die for His sake. Ah ! yes, willingly would I pour out the last drop of my blood to prove how greatly I love Him."

This generous answer touched the heart of the young Princess to such an extent that, on the spot, she resolved to embrace a religion which inspired so much perfection in those who professed it, and also even to leave her country and her parents, and to renounce her worldly possessions, if necessary, that she might learn the mysteries of the Christian Faith, and be able to adore and openly manifest her love for Jesus Christ, Whom even already she loved in her heart.

But her hopes seemed about to be extinguished, for Gilbert and his companion Richard found a favourable opportunity of breaking their chains and escaping from the slavery which had for so long a time been their sad portion. They escaped during the night-time, and had already proceeded a considerable distance on their way before their flight had been discovered.

When the Princess learned that Gilbert had escaped, she was filled with the most profound grief. In her sorrow she for many days shed unceasing tears, for now there was no one who would speak to her of Jesus Christ, Whom she loved so much, nor tell her what she had to do to please Him.

She suddenly recalled to mind, in the midst of her loneliness, that she had heard that the captive's name was Gilbert, and that his home was London, in England. At the same instant she took the resolution to find her way thither, that she might become a Christian.

Having made such preparations as secrecy permitted, she left her father's house by night, and, recommending herself to the protection of Jesus Christ, for Whose sake she had renounced all things, she set out on her long and unknown way. By a miracle of His power and protection, she escaped the many dangers, and overcame the difficulties without number she encountered, and in course of time reached the shore of that narrow sea which divided her from the place of her destination. There she found a vessel ready to sail to England, and on it she embarked. Not long afterwards she reached the end of her long and tedious journey, and arrived safely in the city of London.

But here a new difficulty arose. She was a stranger in a strange land, unknown, and without resources. Moreover, she was ignorant of the language of the people among whom she now found herself, knowing only the name of the one of whom she was in search—Gilbert. While uttering his name in the market-place, it happened, by the providence of God, that Richard his servant had gone thither, who at once recognized her. Who can express the joy and exultation of the Princess when she also recognized in the man she saw before her the same one whom she had seen along with Gilbert in the dungeons of her father.

"How is it that you have come to this distant country?" exclaimed Richard in his surprise at seeing her.

"I have come hither," she replied, "that I may be instructed in the Christian Religion; it is my only desire in this world."

"Wait you here," said Richard, "till I go to my master and inform him of your arrival."

When the faithful servant had reported to Gilbert that he had seen the Moorish Princess in London, he at first refused to believe him, for he could not conceive how one so young and so delicately nurtured, and of such exalted rank, could undertake so long a journey, and have overcome so many dangers and sustained so much fatigue. But when Richard insisted so strongly that he was not mistaken, and that it was really she herself, he was filled with emotion, admiring at the same time her faith and her courage, and was convinced that the finger of God was there. He did not wish that the Princess should come to his own house, but procured for her a suitable home with a pious matron with whom he was acquainted, and besought her to receive her under her care, as if she had been her own child.

On the following day Gilbert went to visit her. As soon as the Saracen maiden saw him, she threw herself at his feet and embraced his knees, while tears streamed from her eyes on the ground. "I conjure you," she said to him, "to have pity on me, and to continue the work of my salvation, which you commenced in my country far away; for the only motive that has brought me hither, and caused me to undertake so long a journey, was to

learn more and more about Jesus Christ and His holy Faith."

Gilbert was profoundly moved at these words, which manifested the great faith and Heaven-born sentiments which inspired them. At the same time there arose within him more tender sentiments towards her, and he determined to ask her to become his wife, that he might have more frequent opportunities of conversing with her on a subject so dear to her heart. But as he had solemnly promised God to consecrate his life to fight against the infidels, he went to consult the Bishop of that city what he would consider best to be done.

On his arrival at the dwelling of the Bishop, he found five other Bishops of the kingdom present. Gilbert related before them all what had taken place, and these holy men, having maturely considered the matter before God, and having asked Him to make known to them His Holy Will, replied that this vocation evidently came from Heaven, and that both of them, being filled with intentions so pure and holy, would certainly obtain the choicest blessings of God upon their union. Thereupon the Bishop of London blessed their union.

Gilbert, who had acquired considerable knowledge of the language she spoke from his long residence in the East, instructed her in all the mysteries of our holy Faith and all the maxims contained in the Gospels. His spouse made such rapid progress in the knowledge of the Faith that she was soon considered sufficiently instructed to be admitted to receive the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. The Bishop of London himself performed this ceremony.

Before beginning, he asked her, according to the ritual of the Church, if she wished to be baptized.

She replied, with a holy joy on her countenance, and shedding many tears, which moved the hearts of all the assistants, that this was her only one desire on earth, and that it was for that purpose alone that she had left her own country to come thither at the peril of her life.

The Bishop, full of holy joy and admiration at hearing this, gave thanks to God, Who is wonderful in the ways He chooses for the perfection of His elect, and imposed on her the name of Matilda. Gilbert, after the waters of Baptism had flowed over her, renewed the vows of his marriage, and received from the Bishop the nuptial benediction

When this solemn rite was accomplished, Gilbert found himself surrounded with fresh difficulties. On the one hand, he considered himself still bound by his vow to proceed to the Holy Land to join the Crusade against the infidels ; and on the other, he dreaded that he would neglect his duty in abandoning his spouse, who had come such a great distance in search of him. These thoughts cast a shade of gloom over his countenance, which Matilda was not long in perceiving.

One day she said to him : " What is it that troubles you ? Are you grieved because you have married me ?"

" Oh no, my beloved Matilda !" he replied. " I thank God from my inmost heart that He has bestowed on me so worthy a spouse ; but you know the vow that binds me to go forth to fight the battles of God against the infidels in Palestine, and I fear

that my departure and my absence will fill your gentle soul with sorrow."

"Ah! my beloved spouse," answered that admirable woman, "fear not to depart from me for so holy a cause; I will not be afflicted, because it is the Holy Will of God, and is for His honour and glory. The one great desire I had to be with you was that you might teach me how to know Jesus Christ, and how to love Him. When you were a prisoner in my father's dungeons, you told me that you were ready to make the sacrifice of your life for the love of Jesus Christ; I also am now ready, if such be His Holy Will, to sacrifice for His sake even you, who are so dear to me. God knows how much it will grieve me to be separated from you, yet joyfully will I resign into His hands a husband whom I came so far to seek only for His sake. Go, then, beloved Gilbert. God will bless your enterprise; and do not be afflicted on my account. The Lord Who showed so great mercy to me when I was yet a pagan will protect me now, since by Baptism I have become His child."

Gilbert then prepared to take his departure, and in the midst of many tears they promised mutually to support each other in their prayers to God.

Gilbert, who could not cease admiring the holy generosity of his wife, set out on his new pilgrimage, leaving her in the care of his faithful Richard. He remained in the East for three years and a half, and thus having fulfilled his vow, returned again to his native country.

In the meantime God had poured forth His benediction on their marriage, and there was born to

them a child who in aftertimes was to edify the Church of God by his holy life, and glorify it by his martyrdom. Before his birth his mother seemed to foresee that her son would one day become great before God, and from the moment of his entrance into this world she considered that God had bestowed him on her that she might bring him up for Him and Heaven. He was born in the year 1119, and was named Thomas at the holy font of Baptism.

Matilda was not deceived in her anticipations. Her son became a great Saint, and a Bishop in the Church, for whose honour he hesitated not to lay down his life. St. Thomas of Canterbury, Bishop and martyr—for he it was—is honoured by the Church of God throughout the whole world on December 29. *From the Life of the Saint.*

VII. On the Christian Reception of this Sacrament.

Blessed Sebastian's advice on Christian marriage.

One thing that the Blessed Sebastian had greatly at heart was the sanctification of the marriage day by good behaviour.

The following is a letter he wrote on this subject to one of his friends who was about to be married:

"As at the marriage of Cana," he wrote, "Jesus and Mary were personally present, so I hope that at your nuptials they will be present also, though invisibly, to give you their blessing. I feel assured that the modesty of the two persons principally

concerned, no less than that of the guests, will be on that day exemplary, everyone bearing in mind that the Son of God chose to ennoble the conjugal state by raising it to the Divine excellence of a Sacrament ; calling to mind also that in the espousals of Christians the Church recognizes her own espousals with Jesus.

" At table, amid the common mirth, let each one from time to time reflect that He Who in the beginning instituted marriage is through His immensity there present, and that all must give to Him a strict account of every word uttered and of even the most minute act which may not be according to His most holy law.

" In this way only will the day of your marriage be one of real gladness, for it is only when you are pleasing God that you can be truly joyous. In sin no one can ever find peace of soul or true happiness."

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